A Critical Study of Modern Orthodox Scholarly Criticism of Western Art

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A Critical Study of Modern Orthodox Christian Theological Criticism of Western Art

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The present work seeks to explore the modern Orthodox Christian view of western art with a particular reference to western painting since the times of the Italian Renaissance to the present day. The fact that the phenomenon of western art is relatively new appears as a main challenge while attempting to examine the validity of modern views expressed in the name of the Orthodox tradition by references from patristic sources. Therefore the method of this thesis is to divide the concept of western art into its constituent components and find the patristic responses to each of them in the light of the Fathers' appreciation of their contemporary art, literature and philosophy outside the church.

As an interdisciplinary exploration of artistic creativity this work has its goal throughout to trace the positive aspects presented by the masterpieces of western art that can aid the Christian process of *theosis* as well as enhance the Orthodox theological contribution to the ecumenical dialogue between the East and West on the grounds of common aspects manifested in the phenomenon of human creativity. Drawing on categories of western aesthetics as well as Orthodox theology, this work is particularly interested in the nature of Orthodox arguments for and against artistic creativity per se and their relationship to the 'Patristic mind' of the Church rather than seeking the direct quotations of the Fathers over the subject in vain. The historical background of the modern disagreement over the issue will be taken into special consideration.

Focusing on western art from an Orthodox perspective is fundamentally at odds with many conservative expectations of human creativity that are usually associated with iconography and liturgical art in Orthodox theology. Yet, the number and quality of works dedicated to explorations of iconography provides a sufficient material for enlightening both Orthodox and western readers on the mystical power of spiritual illumination generating from Orthodox icons as well as its artistic and historical analyses. The topic of this work – art outside the liturgical boundaries of the church – has been deliberately chosen. The central argument of this work is that human creativity in general has a divine origin since it has been inherited from the creative energy of God. The power of artistic influence cannot be doubted especially in a modern society that subconsciously seeks a liberation from the custody of the machinery of technical civilization. Therefore, the search for true and authentic goodness in sincere artistic manifestations of beauty and truth can find an important place in the Orthodox Christian consciousness without a need for its inclusion in worship. If taken seriously great masterpieces of western art offer an immense contribution to the theological study of spiritual senses and their relationship to the process of *theosis*.

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Introduction

This thesis aims to discuss the modern Orthodox Christian Theological understanding of Western art (with special emphasis on painting) since the Italian Renaissance, by contrasting it with the patristic perspective on the elements involved in artistic creativity in general. Obviously the phenomenon of western art as such is relatively modern and can neither be justified nor condemned by quoting the Fathers of the ancient Church. The authors discussed and quoted in this work vary from Plato and the fathers of the Church to the modern western philosophers and artists. One might find it unusual to see the names of Picasso and St Maximus the Confessor side by side. Yet their responses to the same issues address the components that constitute western art and its development.

The motivation for choosing this topic was dictated by the tendency towards overlooking the importance of non-liturgical art on the part of the Orthodox community in my home country. The common Christian attitude to western art in Georgian Orthodox Church varies from neglecting it to condemning it as evil, deceptive, heretical or even demonic.[1] The condemnations usually lack substantial supporting arguments and rely solely on the impulses of certain individuals. The references for the arguments against western art are often made to modern Orthodox authors in Russia and Greece who explain the unique nature of iconography by distinguishing it from western styles of religious painting.

Yet the long history of discussion over the subject provides a much deeper consideration of the concept of artistic creativity. In the beginning the way Byzantium responded to the idea of art formulated the Church's argument for the use of artistic expression in Christian worship, which crystallized throughout the struggles of the iconoclastic controversy. The early church merely saw the painting of the Gospel stories as a means for educating "those who were ignorant of them".[2] Yet, the emergence of panel icons (as distinct from wall paintings) opened a new meaning for artistic engagement in Christian worship: art enabled Christians to venerate God in physical terms. When the painters of Italy started breaking away from the liturgical artistic tradition, the Orthodox viewers understandably developed certain hostility in their way of looking at their paintings. Because of their change of direction, paintings in an unusual style could no longer be venerated. The hostility grew even deeper when the western stylistic influences started infiltrating Orthodox iconography

[1] See Karelin, 1991.
[2] Evagrius, *Ist Eccl*, IV,26, Mango, 1986, 114.

in both Russia and Greece in the 17-19th centuries. Yet the vision of western art as a threat to Orthodox iconography was somehow challenged during the Soviet era, when the faithful *intelligentsia* who had to hide their faith in order to survive, often chose the form of European art as apparel, under which they could hide their faith. The global vision of beauty and creativity was earlier greatly inspired by Vladimir Soloviev and this vision appeared as a shelter to those who needed to break through the darkness and oppression imposed by the regime. The Russian émigrés in Paris also often applied the global vision of art and beauty to their aesthetic perception and discerned the good and the beautiful in all works of art despite the religious affiliations of their makers.

In spite of the usual association of the Orthodox view of art with iconography, it should be noted that the topic of this thesis will by no means address iconography. It rather aims at understanding how Orthodox Christian theology understands the issues that constitute the rationale of any art including western or even pre-Christian art. This research raises questions such as: What is western art and what makes any non-ecclesiastical art fall under the category of 'western' or 'secular'? When and why did human beings start to create, and how can the Church look at the paintings that were produced long before Christianity as well as after the Great Schism? What is that element in artistic creativity that grants art an inherently sacred and even a mysterious quality? What makes the person of the artist an object of special interest? What are the patristic responses to components of art such as love of beauty, creating as sharing, search for eternal bliss by proposing an alternative version of the visible world? And more importantly what conditions the power of art that does not leave Christians totally indifferent to it whether it causes criticism or admiration?

The arguments in this research display a rather unusual interdisciplinary mixture. Thoughts are recalled from the fields of Philosophy, Aesthetics, Art History, Psychology as well as Theology. Yet the purpose of this thesis is to collect different perspectives on artistic creativity and interpret them in the light of the patristic teaching of the Church. Artistic creativity does not refer to dogmatic theology except the reference to the Incarnation over the inclusion of iconography in Christian worship. Yet, consideration of the divine Creator as a model and an origin of human creativity, the parallel of artistic materialization of the idea with the idea of the Incarnation and some other aspects involved in human creativity undeniably refer to cosmological implications proper to divine economy.

Chapter 1

A History of Critical Study of Western Art in the 20th Century Orthodox Theological Scholarship

Introduction

The generally negative Orthodox attitude towards western art ultimately goes back to the Great Schism between the East and the West. The expression of the divorce reflected in art as well as in their liturgical rites and theology. The gradual split between the Eastern and Western Christian traditions can be traced back as far as the Great Schism between Rome and Constantinople in 1054. The split claimed to have happened along doctrinal, theological, linguistic, political, and geographical lines. Each side accused the other of having fallen into heresy and of having initiated the division. The Crusades, the Massacre of the Latins in 1182 and the capture and sack of Constantinople in 1204 deepened the breach and made reconciliation literally impossible. Considering the historical circumstances, the emergence of the Renaissance art in Italy was only another manifestation of the separation between eastern and western Christian traditions, which still outrages some Orthodox nowadays. On the other hand, certain historical attempts made for reconciling their artistic conventions also failed for taking an erroneous path of eclectically combining the incompatible.

An anti-Latin attitude was certainly not alien to later Byzantium. Symeon of Thessalonica saw the Latin innovations as contrary to the tradition of the Church. He rightly claimed, on the authority of the Seventh Council, that the holy icons had been piously established in honour of their divine prototypes, and for their relative worship by the faithful. The icons aimed at instructing us pictorially by means of colours and other materials, which he believed served as a kind of alphabet, while the Latin painters, who "subvert everything,… often confect holy images in a different manner and one that is contrary to custom".[1] Another Byzantine tells us that when he enters a Latin Church, he does not revere any of the images of saints there because, he says: "I do not recognize any of them. At the most I may recognize Christ, but I do not revere Him either, since I do not know in what terms he is inscribed (*ouk oida pôs epigrapheitai*)".[2] Obviously, the Byzantines saw both devotion

[1] Symeon of Thessalonica, *Contra Haereses*, ch, 23. Quoted by Mango 1986, 254.
[2] Gregory Melissenus' speech, recorded by Sylvester Syropoulos, in *Vera Historia*. Quoted by Mango 1986, 254.

and the canonicity of artistic execution as decisive for the authenticity of the presented image.

Modern criticism usually focuses on the split of aesthetic ideals between the eastern and western artistic traditions at the very beginning of the Renaissance, when Western Christian art revealed secular tendencies and gradually departed from the common tradition of canonical medieval painting. The Renaissance directed an artistic gaze towards the earth, and became more inclined to reflect an artist's individual imagination, rather than be that 'window to heaven' through which Early Christian and Medieval art aimed to unite people with the Creator. The character of Renaissance art, which humanized all the Gospel images, while still being involved in the Mass, logically provoked a negative response among the Orthodox believers of the time who saw the western art betraying the tradition while still claiming a 'liturgical' function.

In spite of rejection and dislike on the part of the faithful, the 17th century saw the invasion of western artistic influences in Orthodox Christian cultures such as Greece and even to a greater degree in Russia. The tendency towards westernization in Russia slowly started showing signs since 1610 when the agreement was reached with the Poles. The attraction to Roman Catholicism and even Protestantism was widely expressed at the time but the state was forbidding the Russians to leave the Greek Orthodox Church. Decline of the reputation of the Church and increase of western influences went side by side in the 17th century Russia. The institution of *Oprichnina* introduced by Ivan the Terrible also diminished the reputation of the Church and exposed it as secularized and authoritarian. Ouspensky rightly observed that "just as glass cracks when it is heated unevenly in various parts, so Russian society, unevenly touched by Western influences, cracked".[3] It is perfectly obvious that the weakened faith in people of that time made it possible for the Church to adopt precisely that alien spirit that would distort its already weakened tradition.

The attempts at refining the quality of iconography gradually took a form of adopting western influences particularly by an artist Simon Ushakov[4] who borrowed his artistic principles from the Polish Baroque. The new Russian iconographers who tried to refine the quality of icons by rejecting a peasant taste mistakenly saw the way of doing so in

[3] Kliuchevsky, quoted by Ouspensky 1992, 328.
[4] 1626 – 1686.

attempting to please the taste of that thin layer of westernized cultural elite that was already formed in Russia by the end of the 17th century.

The break with the ecclesiastical consciousness that started in the 17th century reached its peak under Peter the Great in the 18th century; so did the Europeanization of Russia and the clash between the classes. Peter's travel experience to Western Europe impressed him to such a degree that he saw western customs superior to the Russian lifestyle and introduced the western traditions to Russia for enlightening the 'barbarian' customs of the *Rus*'. The customary reforms involved the Church as well as the state. The Church gradually lost its importance as the chief source of cultural life of the society. The fact that the Church administration had to submit to the state power made its position even more ambiguous in the eyes of those disappointed faithful who expected the Church to be not of this world. The aristocratic circles obtained their education in the spirit of the French Enlightenment. The interest in Voltaire took over and overshadowed the power of the church.

The further development of westernization of the Russian mentality continued throughout the 19th century. If the art of ancient Russia was closely tied with the church, now the standards of the church art were dictated by the secular society. Italian architects and artists moved to Russia and naturalized as Russians. The style of the Imperial palaces was followed by nobles as fashion. The Baroque and Rococo style paintings with artificially cold and sentimental appearance were admired rather superficially for the immediate sensations they stirred in public. It was obvious that aestheticism took a form of fashion and not many people in the higher society were anxious to explore the true values of either western or eastern art.

On the other hand, the earlier schism of the Old believers caused the loss of interest to the church among the people of the lower class, while at the same time, they enjoyed certain popularity among some nobles.[5] The Old Believers remained faithful to preserving old and authentic Russian icons, which the reformed and westernized church no longer cared for. Their respect for the past became the key element in attraction towards them, which might not have been as harmless to Orthodoxy as it may be seen nowadays. The lack of instruction and a rather impetuous appeal of old believers led both peasants and aristocracy even further astray from the Orthodox Church. It looks ironical that the Old Believers (or

[5] A little later the *Khlysti*, one of the Old believers' sects started climbing up in the circles of a higher society in the time of Alexander I. See Vernadsky 1961, 180.

Old Ritualists) who broke off from the church in the 17th century over the Nikonian innovations now were themselves forced to enter into greater innovations for the lack of organization of their church.[6] In fact, the struggling Orthodox Church under the pressure from the government was weakened and abandoned, while the Old believers turned away from the Church and embraced precisely what they feared.

In their reaction against the westernization of iconography, it took a long time and enormous work for Orthodox theologians of the 20th century to articulate the Orthodox reasons for not accepting western artistic principles in iconography. Theologians such as Trubetskoy, Florensky, Ouspensky, in Russia and Kontoglou in Greece began by highlighting the basic differences between western art and iconography on the level of artistic expression. Their criticism of western art was reasonably applicable to their particular task of rediscovering the traditional authentic iconography. In spite of severity of some of their criticisms, one of the arguments that these theologians made clear, was the need for distinguishing between the sacred art and secular where naturalistic style might be more applicable to making an individual artistic expression more powerful.

The power of artistic influence even emerged as a blessing in disguise, and a somewhat secret tool for the Church in the Soviet era, when secular art took on the role of a Christian preacher, despite being unable to use religious language and imagery. The masterpieces of Renaissance art that were admired by the Soviets, for purely aesthetic purposes, became rays of hope for the faithful intelligentsia, who learnt how to interpret them in terms of Christian values under the cover of aesthetics. The Soviet pressure forced the Orthodox consciousness to survive under the apparel of western aesthetic models, while the traditional icons at this time were preserved as national treasures and displayed side by side with western masterpieces in Soviet State museums.[7] The involvement of many Orthodox artists in secular art, while they remained personally faithful to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, opened a door to the Orthodox Church to embrace the space outside a

[6] Ordination of new priests became impossible since they had no bishops and the old ones were getting old and dying. This caused a division among the Old believers into two major groups which subsequently split into many smaller groups. One accepted the priestless church and turned into a group similar to protestant churches. The other group sought an authority of a Bishop ordained beyond the limits of the Russian empire and ended up with a Bishop from Bukovina, which then formed part of Austria. See Vernandsky 1961,180.
[7] The Famous icon of *the Hospitality of Abraham* by Andrey Rublev has been preserved at the Tretiakov State Gallery in Moscow under the name *The Trinity* since 1929. See Illustration №1.

strictly liturgical circle. Rather it almost transferred the sacred space from the Church to the artistic perception under the aesthetic appearance.

Yet, Russian avant-garde became a threat to the Soviet regime not for its political statement alone but even more for its ability to break through the enclosed space, and experience the world of the transcendent outside the Soviet materialism and atheism. The same tendency was later refined and evaluated to a greater degree by the famous filmmaker Andrey Tarkovsky, whose religious sensibility managed to portray the eternal nature of the truth in his films without direct references to the religious language of icons or the Church. The increasing interest in abstract, immaterial or inner reality of 20th century art in Russia exposed misunderstanding of the potentials of art, and challenged the Orthodox Christian response to the nature of artistic creativity in general. Non-liturgical art imbued with Christian sensibility manifested the divine origin of artistic creativity under the Soviet regime, making it possible to look even at many Western masterpieces from the perspective of Orthodox Christian aesthetics, and discern its potential for supplementing the spiritual refinement and maturity of Christians. Just as Dostoyevsky in the past stared at *Sistine Madonna*[8] for hours in the Old Masters Gallery in Dresden,[9] so in the same way many visitors of the Hermitage Museum could not take their eyes and minds off the paintings of Simone Martini,[10] Rembrandt[11] or Van Gogh.[12] Such a haunting experience of the artistic touch beyond the canvas entailed greater significance for the human soul than mere aesthetic fascination.

1.1. The crisis of national identity and the Slavophile movement in the 19th century Russia

Western taste in Russia continued to prevail until the end of the 19th century. The submission of the Church to the state caused the basic distrust of the Church on the side of the faithful. The state, wishing to use the Church's power for strengthening its own, instead undermined the Church's reputation by suppressing the conscience of the Church and demanding obedience and submission. The Church was almost abandoned and emptied. However, the thirst for the divine never faded among the Russian intelligentsia as well as

[8] Illustration №2.
[9] Dostoevsky, A. G. 1977, 117-19.
[10] Illustration №3.
[11] Illustration №4.
[12] Illustration №5.

among the peasants. The 19th century saw further disputes over the authenticity of applying the ideals of the French enlightenment to the Russian reality. Apart from a chance to embrace the universal values and learn from western culture, the excessive interest in the West obviously threatened the very nature of the Russian national identity, which upset many Russian intellectuals of the time.

The task of searching for a proper, unique cultural identity fell on the few gifted intellectuals who saw the need of acknowledging and appreciating the values of their own past and tradition. The Russian intelligentsia of the 19th century sought inspiration in aesthetic humanism, yet they retained one feature of the ecclesiastical world-view, which Zenkovsky calls the "theurgical idea".[13] They continued to consider universally human themes in the context of God as the Creator of all things.

Opposition between two groups of intellectuals took place between 1830-1840. The immediate pretext for the dispute was the 1836 publication of a 'Philosophical letter' by Petr Chaadaev,[14] a Russian thinker who argued that Russia never belonged either to the West or to the East, and claimed its own unique identity. The letter provoked a strong reaction from the supporters of Peter's politics. Eventually it caused the formation of two intellectual groups known as the 'Westerners' or 'Westernizers' (Zapadniki) and the 'Slavophiles' (Slavioanofily). Westernizers complained about Russia's cultural backwardness. They set for Russia the task of adopting the paradigm of the West as a universal standard, and of assimilating with that standard, thus following the Petrine policy. On the other hand the Slavophiles held that the historical-cultural differences between Russia and the West indicated Russia's superiority and its radically different nature.

There can be found certain similarities between the ideology of the Old Believers and the majority of the Slavophiles. Slavophiles, like the Old Believers of the 17th century, located a social ideal in the distant past as the "golden age" of Russia, specifically in pre-Mongol *Rus'*. The Slavophiles usually saw Peter the Great, whom the Old Believers even condemned as Antichrist,[15] as the initiator of the fall brought about by his reforms. Whether the Old believer's ideology directly influenced the Slavophiles or not, the fact is that they

[13] Zenkovsky 1953, 171.
[14] 1794-1856.
[15] Riasanovsky 1985, 77-78.

both had one concern in mind: how to retain their national identity, which had faded away as a product of the invasion of western values.

The Slavophiles saw the uniqueness of the Russian identity in its strong sense of a collective consciousness. They saw the 'narodnost', or national consciousness of the Russian people, expressed and embodied by a society infused with principles of harmony and concord. They directed their attention to the idea of a community, 'obshchina', and asserted that this type of peasant community constituted a unique feature of *Rus'* a feature that was absent in the West, which they associated with more conflict-ridden aggregation of individuals, rather than a peaceful community of related souls.[16] The anti-western attitude of the Slavophiles originated from their belief that the West developed from a morally corrupt source based on division instead of unity. According to them this corrupt source was incapable of generating a living organism.[17]

1.2. Alexey Khomiakov[18]: Russian identity and the Sobornost of the Church

The leader of the group who found a Church-oriented solution to the problems raised by the *Slavophiles* was Alexey Khomiakov. Unlike the Old Believers who turned away from the official Church, believing they would find the truth of Orthodoxy elsewhere, Khomiakov built his theological vision on the very idea of the Church, in spite of the fact that the official Church was under the power of a secularized state. Khomiakov's concern was not the West as such, but how the West influenced and damaged Russia by annexing its cultural values. His anti-western approach was only a reaction to the historical reality of Russia, resulting in the loss of Russian identity. According to him, the natural and moral fraternity among Russians possessed certain communal virtues that were unlikely to be found elsewhere in the history of the world: genuine humility, meekness combined with spiritual strength, inexhaustible tolerance, a disposition toward self-sacrifice, honesty before courts of law and deep respect for justice… [and] strong family ties.[19] Unlike Aksakov and others, Khomiakov did not locate the idea in the past, but rather saw the perfect form of community of the Church expressed in the the idea of *Sobornost* derived from the adjective

[16] Zenkovsky 1953, 33.
[17] See more on Slavophiles: Zenkovsky 1953, 171-238.
[18] 1804-1860.
[19] Khomiakov 1955, 102-136.

'sobornaia', meaning a sense of catholicity or togetherness in reference to the Nicene Creed.[20]

The Khomiakov's use of the term *Sobornost* was focused on his claim that the Church's authority belongs not to the Patriarch, bishop, or clergy alone, but to the laity as well: it belongs to the whole Orthodox people.[21] Since his time, the term *Sobornost* has occupied an important place in the life of the Church and in the Orthodox religious thought. It has become a distinct feature of the Orthodox tradition. Khomiakov's argument for the equality of all in the Church, and that the Church consisted equally of laity as much as of hierarchs in their unity and community, encouraged people to join the Church and to speak the truth in the name of the Church, rather than abandon it. Khomiakov's contribution is therefore not limited to the revival of national identity, but also contributed greatly to the revival and promotion of an ecclesiastical consciousness among all the Orthodox, even outside of Russia.

Khomiakov saw the only way to Russia's national recovery in its inseparability from Orthodoxy. It is not surprising that when it came to western art, Khomiakov saw it as lifeless.[22] He saw the concept of artistic freedom in the western concept of creativity as wasted, for he believed that individual and isolated artists can find nothing but emptiness in themselves. His proposed way of personhood as opposed to the individual isolated from the community, described someone who was part of the larger community and open to contribute his own personal findings to the collective identity. The Westernizers stressed the concept of individualism as an ethical principle as much as the Slavophiles exalted the community. The difference between person and individual in Khomiakov's thought depends precisely in the person's engagement with the community in the fullness of freedom.[23]

In spite of his dislike of "lifeless" Western art, Khomiakov revealed a special gentleness towards English art and English character in general.[24] He detected a special sense of dignity in the English temperament, which he found similar to the Russian nature. That is,

[20] The Pre-Nikonian Russian translation of the Nicene Creed published in 1650 and called Kormchaia Patriarkha Iosifa uses the word "Sobornaia" instead of the modern use of the Greek-derived "kafolicheskaia". See Lebedev 1896,.1-11.
[21] Khomiakov 1955, 267.
[22] Khomiakov 1955, 114.
[23] Khomiakov 1955, 66.
[24] Khomiakov 1955, 114.

he believed, why England had never been fully conquered by any invader and this gave him hope for Russia's cultural survival as well.[25] Khomiakov's theological vision is focused on the relationship of Russia with the world, but he is far from holding a xenophobic attitude and distinguishes the aspects that might be adopted from those that should be rejected, according to their degree of compatibility with the Orthodox spirit and with the Russian cultural identity.

1.3. Orthodox spirituality versus creativity - case study: Nikolai Gogol[26]

As already mentioned earlier the Church of the 19th century had a reason to look at the individual creativity with suspicion. Ignati Bryanchaninov, an Orthodox bishop of the 19th century and later canonized as a saint, saw imaginative artists as especially passionate people, who "permeated by sin, … portray sin - only sin".[27] In spite of the overwhelming presence of western style icons in Orthodox Churches, there must have been a strong reaction against westernisation, which the theologians of later times articulated more carefully. However, this reaction in simple people perhaps developed into the reaction against creativity, as if it was a merely western phenomenon.

The tragic example of a famous writer, Nikolai Gogol, can illustrate that extreme reaction against westernization that gradually turned Orthodox ascetics into fundamentalist spiritual guides who, failing to find the harmony between art and Orthodox faith, damaged the mentality of their congregation.[28] While some of his secular contemporaries saw no special problem between faith and art, Gogol was tormented by the tragedy of their separation and experienced it with an 'exceptional force'.[29] Gogol saw the opposition between art and faith in the context of morality. Inspired by his spiritual elder, who demanded severely rigorist, rather unrealistic and even unnatural morality, Gogol saw the disintegrating element in aesthetics while at the same time he could not give up his passionate love for art. This dualism of feelings led him towards creating an *aesthetic utopia*, where he desired to convince himself almost out of guilt that art was 'useful'. The breakup of this utopia

[25] Khomiakov 1955, 125, 135.
[26] 1809-1852.
[27] Brianchaninov quoted by Ouspensky 1992, 474.
[28] An Orthodox psychiatrist Dimitri Avdeev presents the life of Gogol as a case study from a psychiatrist's perspective considering his death from depression as a result of an inadequate spiritual guidance. Avdeev, *Depression As A Passion And Depression As A Malady*, (In Russian), available online at: http://www.pobedish.ru/main/depress?id=75, e-book downloaded on 08.08.2012.
[29] Zenkovsky 1953, 173.

produced an enormous trauma in his spiritual world. In 1836 at the age of 27 he started to return deeply and passionately to religious life by fully submitting to his spiritual guide, a *starets*, Father Matthew.[30] The consciousness of the tragic incompatibility between the Church and art accompanied Gogol for many years, eventually leading him into depression at the end of his life. The tragic figure of Gogol shows the importance of the crisis which Russia faced in the 19th century and it also marked the beginning of the need to rethink the Russian spirituality in a more universal context.

Gogol connects the 'natural' amoralism of modern man with the dominance of the aesthetic principle. Conflict between outward beauty and inner corruption is portrayed in his *Nevsky Prospect* with a reference to the deceptiveness of outward beauty. He found it enormously problematic to fit art and beauty into the ascetic morality of Orthodox faith. However, his flight to religious life was not an escape from art and culture but a search for a solution to the problem of combining Orthodoxy and art. The Church was for him the only authority that had the potential to solve all the problems which had been posed so sharply before all mankind. He eventually introduced the idea of 'Orthodox Culture'. This new idea became an inspiration for many Russian thinkers. For this contribution to the Russian philosophic thought Zenkovsky justly considers Gogol with confidence as "a prophet of orthodox culture".[31]

Orthodoxy for Gogol became a distinctive sign that distinguished Russia from the spirit of Western Christianity. He considered the question of the sanctification of the arts, and its Christian ministry, with special profundity and insight. However, as Gogol's own example demonstrates not every *starets* was gifted with the pastoral insight to support and evaluate his idea without excluding every artistic experience from the Christian life. Gogol's inner conflict about the divorce between Church and art outside of a liturgical context pointed to his broader vision of artistic creativity, which was unfortunately suppressed by the conservative, anti-creative approach. He saw that the Orthodox Church needed to revive its own true and authentic artistic traditions, but he also needed to admit the possibility of appreciating great and valuable western masterpieces while still remaining a faithful Orthodox Christian. He found these two poles impossible to reconcile. He was rightly convinced that there had to be an elevating element in art beyond mere aesthetic enjoyment,

[30] Avdeev, http://www.pobedish.ru/main/depress?id=75.
[31] Zenkovsky 1953, 172.

and that this element had to be useful, not in utilitarian terms, but rather in terms of acquiring and cultivating the Orthodox faith. In fact, Gogol was the first intellectual whose tragic life publicly screamed out the crisis caused by the lack of Orthodox Christian aesthetic consciousness in Russia. Gogol's death of depression exemplified the need for incorporating the Orthodox theological perception within the perception of the arts in general.

1.4. Western concept of aesthetics and a Russian literary response – Fyodor Dostoyevsky[32]

The 19th century faced the crisis of humanism as well as of spirituality everywhere in the world. Industrialization, urbanization, the progress of science and technical civilization speeded up the pace of life and brought in the noise and anxiety leading to isolation, alienation and the undermining of human and spiritual values. The world became too busy and overly pragmatic, and all societies engaged in its rhythm failed to see the world beyond their utilitarian needs. Thirst for authenticity, for the spiritual and the unique as opposed to the artificial, manufactured and mass-produced erupted in Western Europe as much as in Russia. It could be said that the formulation of aesthetics as a discipline in Europe started in the 18th century, when Alexander Baumgarten embarked on his development of the concept for the study of the nature of good and bad taste. [33] Later on the same term developed as a philosophy of art, and the study and analysis of the appreciation of beauty in art and in nature, as well as of the interrelation between the sensual and rational parts of human nature. The artists of the century started fighting against academic painting and began a new task: to seek authenticity in opposing the artificiality of the world by pointing towards the essential and authentic features of human existence. Beauty might have been the main concern for aesthetic discipline, but the artists since postimpressionism started focusing on the power of expression and saying the unpleasant truth, rather than merely pleasing the eye.

Aesthetic thirst in Russia was very much influenced by Western philosophical thought, but it also would not escape the ecclesiastical consciousness, which, as Khomiakov proved, was rooted in their national identity. The re-awakened longing for authentic spirituality directed the attention of Russian intelligentsia to the outstanding ascetics of their times;

[32] 1821-1881.
[33] Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, 1st edition published in 1739.

their exceptional pastoral and literary legacy seemed likely to be preserving and nurturing the authenticity of Russia's spiritual roots. A particular interest was taken in the ascetics and Hierarchs of the Church such as Seraphim of Sarov, Tikhon of Zadonsk, Theophan the Recluse, and Ignatius Bryanchaninov all canonized later as saints of the Church.

A Russian businessman and a landowner Nikolai Motovilov recorded his conversation with St Seraphim of Sarov in 1831.[34] Visiting the great ascetics 'not of this world', inspired a new trend in Russian literature. A writer desired to share with his readers the experience of encountering a saintly man. The prose of the 19th century created a significant opportunity for secular writing to become a channel of communication between the transcendent vision of the ascetics and the world in which they lived. The struggle between the aesthetic and ecclesiastical consciousness was at times so strong that it affected the personal lives of writers, as in the case of Gogol described above. Bukharev, facing the difficulty of Orthodoxy's incompatibility with art and aesthetics, gave up the rank of priesthood and went into the world; Leontiev, on the contrary, caught between the problems of religion and aesthetics, rejected the world and went to a monastery. In the light of this tragic separation between the religious and the secular, Dostoyevsky proclaimed the need for the 'earth-kissing' spirituality enlightening a world thirsting for the divine.[35] His image of Starets Zosima, who is commonly known to be a literary portrait of Starets Amvrosi of Optina,[36] may additionally be inspired by the personalities of Seraphim of Sarov and Tikhon of Zadonsk and other elders of whom he was aware. The Dostoyevskian image of a holy man depicted him not alienated from the world but accepting the world in his arms through the love of God. Through connecting the idea of the holy life with the world, Dostoyevsky brought the theurgic experience of the Church into the midst of the world, touching and shaking its heart through the loving humility of the *starets*. Dostoyevsky, unlike Gogol, Tolstoy and Leontiev, is bringing the ideal of sanctity to the world instead of enhancing the conflict between the two. Dostoyevsky never officially belonged to the group of

[34] The conversation was first published by S. Nilus in *Velikoe v Malom (The Great in the Small)*,2nd edition, (Tsarskoye Selo, 1905); has been reprinted in Florensky 1997.
[35] Starets Zosima inspired monks to take care of the people living in the world. Dostoyevsky, 1982, 370.
[36] However, Konstantin Leontiev wrote in his letter to Rozanov that the Optina monks saw Dostoyevsky's image of Starets Zosima distorting the image of starets Amvrosi and *the Brothers Karamazovs* as "incorrect Orthodox work". According to leontiev, the Monks of Optina found preaching of kingdom of love on earth heretical, associating it with the heresy of chiliasm. See K.Leontiev 1981, 46-47. Raphael Karelin argues the same when he quotes Starets Amvrosi's severe criticism towards Soloviev and Dostoyevsky. See Karelin 1981, 131.

Slavophiles, but he had a strong sense of Russian soil and soul. Dostoyevsky, as a mystic and a religious thinker, stood out in this direction with a stronger reference to the Orthodox faith, than other writers of his time. Dostoyevsky's approach serves as the most crucial inspiration to the approach used in this thesis: his desire to imbue the fallen and suffering world with the love of God totally opposes the idea of increasing the conflict between ascetic experience and the things that are precious and sacred for people living in the world. Dostoyevsky's openness to anything that touched the human soul embraced western art as well as anything else. It is likely that Dostoyevsky speaks his own mind through one of his characters, who sees in the Sistine Madonna a 'fantastic' expression of "mournful religious ecstasy".[37] Instead of fitting the painting into the strictly Orthodox traditional standards, he establishes a dialogue with it: he lets it speak to him and then 'listens' to it himself as an Orthodox Christian. This approach is going to be the leitmotif of the present research.

One can see the stages in the development of modern Russian aesthetics in the 18th and 19th centuries: earlier on one finds thinkers more concerned with preserving the cultural heritage; later towards the end of the 19th century there emerges a much wider vision of western and indeed of global artistic experience. The tendency towards embracing the world is usually more characteristic of those religious philosophers who did not limit their ecclesiastical vision to the expectations of their local Church of the time. Instead, they saw the Church as a concentrate of those divine energies which are traceable all over the world. The authors who apply their concepts on art and beauty beyond the canonical boundaries of the Church are by no means non-believers, nor do they lack a religious outlook on subjects with which the whole of humankind is concerned.

1.5. Vladimir Soloviev[38]

While the poets, artists, composers and writers sought beauty in their own creations, the great philosopher Vladimir Soloviev was interested in ontological concept of beauty as something inherent in the created order of cosmic unity. A modern Russian scholar rightly put it: "the best features of the Russian mentality were incarnated in Soloviev… He was the first who combined the spirit of the Russian wise man with the western passion for thoroughly analytical, scholarly thinking".[39] The aesthetics of Soloviev, who relies on

[37] Dostoyevsky, 2003, 496.
[38] 1853 -1900.
[39] Bychkov, 2004,76.

Neoplatonism, together with 19th century German classical and Russian aesthetics, expands its view to a much broader space than religious and specifically Orthodox Christian aesthetics.

Soloviev suggested his own definition of art, which is closely linked to the Orthodox concept of the Incarnation of the Word as the *Logos* and the *idea* of all things. He argues, "Every tangible representation of any object and phenomenon from the point of view of its final, definitive status, or in the light of the world to come, is artistic work".[40] Materialization of the invisible is caused by the limitation of human nature in its search for the essence of things: "While spirit is incapable of giving to its interior content a direct outward expression, it remains embodied in a material phenomenon".[41] The final aim of spiritualizing matter through individual participation in the universal idea is "the highest development of each individual in the fullest unity of all; and this necessarily includes in itself our life's aim as well, which we, consequently, have neither the motive for nor the possibility of separating or isolating from the universal aim".[42] Soloviev speaks about the highest significance of art, and points to its unbreakable link with religion since prehistoric times. He believes that because this form was imperfect and superficial, it ceased to exist. The contemporary alienation of art from religion seems to Soloviev as a transition from their primordial unity to their free future synthesis. For the future life, to which true art already refers, will be based not on the human element being swallowed by the divine, but on their free cooperation.[43] Unlike the four theologians who later misjudged all the individual artists for their desire for freedom and egotism, Soloviev saw an individual artist as someone who was not free in his creativity, while being guided by the common sense of objective and eternal beauty.[44] Soloviev's artist (not only an iconographer) has mortified his own desires, and he is ready and open to receive inspiration from above. In fact, Soloviev suggests that conscious appreciation of the authentic meaning of creativity may enable an artist to co-operate with divine will and subsequently to re-establish the primordial unity between art and religion. He saw the meaning of art in a mystical spirit of free *theurgy*, transforming the world on its way to perfection, when not only will the religious idea possess the artist, but he himself will possess *it*, and consciously guide it

[40] Soloviev, 2003, 76
[41] Soloviev, 2003, 73.
[42] Soloviev, 2003, 127.
[43] Soloviev, 1966-1970, Vol. 6, 85.
[44] Soloviev, 1966-1970, Vol. 9, 305.

through material presentations. Art, by incarnating the true idea of human life in images, continues the natural process of incarnation of the Idea. Soloviev comes to argue that the function of art is an active transformation of reality aiming at reaching the positive and true all-unity. The goal, which has not yet been achieved by natural means, has to be fulfilled through human creativity.

Soloviev grants the central place in his aesthetics to the sense of beauty as an ultimate idea of art. Art robes all human relationships in beauty. However, he is by no means satisfied with the much acclaimed understanding of beauty as a source of delight to the eye and itself an object of admiration. Instead, he points towards objective, absolute or eternal beauty, which cannot be experienced in its fullness anywhere in the material world and which can only be echoed through artistic perception as well as through mystical contemplation. These two share senses or sensuousness rather than consciousness as their foundation and they both rely on the imagination rather than on analytical thought and logical reasoning. Soloviev considers mystical experience not as something vague and uncertain but as the highest form of creative activity. Soloviev in fact, as a philosopher rather than a theologian, saw the universal meaning of artistic creativity, something that obviously both challenged and inspired the position of Orthodox thinkers of later generation.

1.6. The state of Russian art at the end of the 19th century: the four apologists of rediscovering the authentic style

The beginning of the 20th century in Russia saw a logical continuation of the previous struggles and turmoils. The rejection of fashionable academic painting by the group of realist artists called 'Peredvizhniki' in 1870 was a significant moment in the development of Russian artistic ideals. The Peredvizhniki sought realism through portraying real lives of real people, thus going beyond the mere use of a naturalistic manner. The combination of realistic painting with church art, did not quite lead to what either the artists themselves or the believers really desired. Artists such as Repin,[45] Vasnetsov[46] and Nesterov[47] tried to combine modern artistic means with the manner of old Russian and Byzantine painting, which resulted in paintings of a somewhat eclectic and unoriginal nature. They were neither icons, nor great masterpieces. Nesterov's murals at the Cathedral of Vladimir in Kiev,

[45] Illustration №6.
[46] Illustration №7.
[47] Illustration №8.

painted between 1885 and 1895,[48] demonstrate the artistic search for tradition, which could only be traced in the distant past. The paintings display a romanticizing tendency toward traditional iconography, rather than sharing in a truly iconic spirit. Artists had to dispense with the absurdity and confusion inherent in combining the two, and distinguish between the sacred icon and a historical painting, a portrait or a genre painting. Recovery of traditional iconography became a concern for those theologians who saw art as a proclamation of the Orthodox truth, which could not be located in the chronology of the history of arts, but belonged rather to the eternal realm.

Painting icons at the end of the 19th century was a popular trend among peasants, particularly in the province of Vladimir. Nikolai Kondakov organized a special committee in 1901 under the patronage of Nicholas II to promote traditional icon painting. The committee succeeded in aiding peasant iconographers and providing them with special training. However, this did not stop the aristocrats from revering and encouraging the process of westernization in iconography until well into the 20th century.

The search for authentic iconography became an ongoing concern in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Orthodox scholars like Eugene Trubetskoi, Pavel Florensky and Leonid Ouspensky published their research studies on the need for recovering a true and authentic iconography. Ouspensky, who was incredibly excited by the idea of rediscovering this true iconography, also called it: "Not a rediscovery but a return to the icon"[49] that implied a liberation from the custody of cheap and tasteless western influences.

1.6.1. Prince Eugene Trubetskoi[50]

who is usually referred as the first author concerned with the rediscovery of old iconography, points to the specific theological aspect of the nature of icons, which is about the global hope of the resurrection and glory, rather than the naturalism of the particulars in the fallen world. Trubetskoi believes that the idea of *Sobornost* as the all-embracing Church is essential for celebrating faith in a holistic way. Trubetskoi points out that here on earth communality is realized only among people, but in the future world it becomes the fundamental principle of world order as a whole "extended to include 'all breathing things',

[48] See Illustration №8.
[49] Ouspensky, 1992, 470.
[50] 1863-1920

all the 'new creatures' to be resurrected in Christ together with man".[51] It is precisely what iconography sets as its object: to celebrate the resurrected world rather than that "unconscious iconoclasm"[52] of westernization that aims at focusing on the particulars of the fallen and temporary world.

Trubetskoi, who made an immense contribution to the rediscovery of authentic icons and explaining them, was nevertheless open to the western experience of art. His immediate response to the icon of the entombment in Ostroukhov's collection in Moscow explicitly referred to the emotional expression emerging in the proto-Renaissance: "The Virgin's grief is rendered with a power that may be equalled only in the works of Giotto or other masters of Florentine art in its highest".[53] He rightly believed that the old Russian icons were not at all deprived of renderings of "such moods as ardent hope or quiescence in God".[54] Trubetskoi certainly demonstrated the features of an art expert while examining the quality of artworks. Looking at Vasnetsov's paintings he complained that "The righteous flying to paradise look too natural: their thoughts seem intent on reaching heaven. This, and the unhealthy hysterical expression of some of the faces, makes the whole fresco too realistic for a Church and thus weakens its impact".[55] Trubetskoi's judgement on artistic quality was not merely conditioned by how naturalistic an artwork looked, but rather by how true and authentic was the expression it aimed at conveying. Trubetskoi applies an idea of Schopenhauer, primarily to icons, but without excluding other great works of art: "great paintings should be approached like royalty. It would be impertinent to speak to them; one must stand before them and deferentially wait for them to speak to us first".[56] This reverence and awe in front of artworks speaks of his global vision of the concept of artistic creativity in the spirit of Soloviev and his followers. It is also obvious that Trubetskoi's object of criticism is not western art as such but those Russian painters who pretended to be painting icons by employing the western style. Trubetskoi is marching against the combination of two different artistic languages rather than against the West as such.

[51] Trubetskoi 1973, 89.
[52] Trubetskoi 1973, 95.
[53] Trubetskoi 1973, 22.
[54] Trubetskoi 1973.
[55] Trubetskoi 1973, 23.
[56] Paraphrased by Trubetskoi 1973, 27.

In spite of his personal admiration for all great masterpieces of any art, he made his main concern to focus his attention on old and authentic iconography. Iconography for Trubetskoi stands higher than any other art for its concern for the world of divine glory and the interaction of two worlds, of two planes of being: on the one hand, the eternal place of the higher regions; on the other, a world of "sorrow, sin and chaos, but thirsting for God's peace – a world that seeks but has not yet found God".[57] The meaning of icons he saw precisely in their nature as symbols standing between two worlds as a go between: "This symbolic style is especially moving in the icons that directly contrast the two worlds – the ancient cosmos enslaved by sin and the all-embracing Church where this slavery is forever abolished".[58]

Icons in Trubetskoi's thought manifest in its fullness "the beauty of God's design that would save the world".[59]

1.6.2. Father Pavel Florensky,[60] more influential than any other thinker inside the Church of that time, dedicated a large part of his *Iconostasis*[61] to analysing the difference between iconography and western art. Florensky left a significant legacy on the subject of aesthetics and art: he wrote on art, icons, inverse perspective, and the synthesis between arts in the Church architecture. Florensky's contribution to theological thought as well as aesthetics is twofold considering his bravery in speaking out under the Soviet regime which ultimately led to his martyr-like death in 1937. Father Pavel argued in accordance with the patristic tradition that God is the highest beauty and all "becomes beautiful in communion with Him".[62] Here, he defines the aesthetic not as a primary part of being or consciousness, but as a power or energy penetrating all the layers of being. The concepts of beauty and light have very important places in his system. He is convinced that the power of beauty is by no means less than any physical power. Florensky applauded the idea of beauty in art which is turned towards God. He believed that all things are beautiful only when they are facing God, and all is ugly when turned away from God. He argued that precisely in beauty and its variety, light, and through it in mystical acts of serving God, monastic efforts and contemplation of the icon perceive the Trinitarian truth.

[57] Trubetskoi 1973, 43.
[58] Trubetskoi 1973, 31.
[59] Trubetskoi 1973, 94.
[60] 1882-1937.
[61] Written in 1922, published only in 1978.
[62] Florensky, quoted by Bichkov 1993, 26.

He argued that humankind would not and could not exist without the existence of art and aesthetic phenomena. Florensky's aesthetic concept was based on Orthodox Christian asceticism. He even identified asceticism as Orthodox aesthetics and spiritual elders as the chief aesthetic mediators. He emphasised that the holy fathers called asceticism not a study, or science, or even moral work, but art, and even as art of arts.[63] This explains his regard for the icon as an ideal sacred-artistic phenomenon charged with the energy of the archetype.

Because the highest truth in its pure form is accessible only to a few ascetics, our real guides in the world must be the symbols that appear in art and aesthetics - icons in their pure form. Florensky understands the symbol as a sacred being. It not only marks something beyond it, but reveals the thing, it possesses the living energy that interpenetrates the two beings, symbol *and* archetype. Florensky sees the icon as *the* ontological symbol. An iconographer not only paints (writes) icons like a secular artist, but opens the window with his brush, the window through which we see the original. This generates the sacred realism of the icon. For the Orthodox consciousness the icon is an artefact of divine existence, the essence of which is impossible to explain rationally or describe verbally. The icon presents the unclouded reality, which is presentable at the expense of the spiritual experience of icon painters and their spiritual guides as well as the iconographic canon.

Fr. Pavel was interested in all aspects of icon painting and he developed a certain aesthetic system of the icon, especially with the idea of inverse perspective. On the other hand, he, like Khomiakov, saw the illusionism of western art as evidence of an inner emptiness that forced artists to pursue the external resemblance of visual forms. All this he summarized as evidence of the crisis of art. He believed that by creating an illusion of real things, this art was taking the spectator's attention away from real objects, which were, on the contrary, accentuated in the symbolic language of medieval art. In other words, Florensky believed that while the icon is directing the attention to the prototype of the image, mimetic art is distracting from the original and instead focuses one's attention on the emptiness, on the nonexistent illusion.

[63] Florensky 1914, 99.

In general, Florensky's attitude to all 'Renaissance-like' art is unequivocally negative. He sees it as secular, rationalistic, superficial, illusionistic, spiritually weak and individualistic. Modernity in general appears to him as gradual process of disintegration of being and replacement of it by emptiness, chaos, and death. Medieval art he believes was the total opposite of this crisis. It was universal, eternal, spiritually active, integrated with and in harmony with the basic needs of humanity. He believed that the Orthodox cultic art, in particular, was a highly spiritual canonical art, the function of which was to synthesise the liturgical consciousness. He rightly saw this synthesis as uniting architecture, wall paintings, the iconostasis, the choreography of the clergy, the singing, and the spectacular-sensitive atmosphere created by the faint glimmering of lamps in front of the icons, and the smoke going up from candles, and the interplay of moderate light with dark space.

Florensky's negative approach to western art did not select any particular period in the history of western art, but he sees the whole of western art as the fruit of the same degradation that started with the Italian Renaissance and ever since it has "from any angle – not even in its most classicistic moment – exhibited coherence".[64] Florensky is concerned about the earthliness of western painting, the naturalistic manner of which he sees as the superficiality of the presented subject. This superficiality does not merely consist of the naturalistic depiction employed by the West, but he sees the difference between eastern spirituality and western materialism in terms of ontological consciousness of the east as opposed to the factuality of Western rationalism. However, Florensky develops his argument further by suggesting that Western rationalism creates an alternative world rivalling with God's creation, while "the ontology of the East believes otherwise, saying that everything is created only by the Real One, by the Creator".[65] Therefore naturalistic depiction for Florensky is the result rather than the reason of separation from the truth. Florensky applies mystical vision to the perception of art instead of perceiving artworks on a visual level. He encourages one to see beyond their visual presentation, which sadly makes him detect in Rembrandt's paintings only the: "primordial light, which is the self-illuminescence of primordial darkness … This primordial light is, of course", adds Florensky, "pantheism – which is the polarity created by Renaissance atheism".[66] Whereas,

[64] Florensky 1996, 146.
[65] Florensky 1996, 138.
[66] Florensky 1996, 149.

by contrast, the Church understands light as an "ontological force that mystically created what exists".[67]

Florensky also makes a sharp judgement over an individual interpretation within traditional iconography: "anyone who ignores the Holy Tradition and begins to fashion icons according his own thinking will be condemned to eternal torment".[68] Florensky's dislike of individual artistic expression involves the western artist as much as an iconographer. He allegorically compares the sense of preoccupation with one's own self with the western use of canvas as opposed to the wooden board of an icon. He believes that the icon board, because it is immovable, hard and unbending, personifies the tradition, which is too strict, obligatory, and ontological for the hand of the Renaissance artist. Florensky sees a western painter trying to realize himself solely among earthly appearances, without the 'obstacle' of another world. The canvas provides him with "the feeling of autonomy, of being a law unto himself, and so his hand does not want to be disturbed by encountering something that does not submit to his will".[69] This view may easily be doubted by a reader in the 21st century when individual artists use any medium of any hardness for expressing themselves using the texture and properties of the material for enrichment of their spiritual expression. Yet, the point Florensky is making is that an individual western artist or an artist influenced by the west flees the tradition and seeks freedom from it in order to express his own self as opposed to the collective consciousness.

Florensky's argument against the aesthetics of icons also shaped the concept of anti-aestheticism that often prevails in modern Orthodox thinking. He argues that "from the Renaissance on, the religious art of the West has been based upon aesthetic delusion".[70] He believes that all traditionally made icons "manifest the Truth to all persons, even the wholly illiterate" but that some contemporary, westernized icons "publicly cry out lies in the midst of Churches".[71] For Florensky the concept of 'Orthodox taste' is generally considered as a taste for spiritual values and for the truth in rather abstract terms. He applies the *theurgic* principle to the perception of icons instead of the aesthetic. A true icon is an ontological

[67] Florensky 1996, 147.
[68] Florensky 1996, 78.
[69] Florensky 1996, 105.
[70] Florensky 1996, 69.
[71] Florensky 1996, 83.

entity, formed by the light, guided and inspired by the tradition, and it manifests truth to everyone.

As much one is bound to admire Florensky's intelligence, his contribution to Russian theological thought and his bravery and heroism in Soviet times, his negativity towards western art can seem somewhat exaggerated. It is clear that his particular concern is a rediscovery of traditional iconography, which had long been silenced by western elements, but his arguments against western art focuses rather excessively on negation of western art rather than admiration for icons: he tends to present iconography as almost a compilation of elements of which western art is lacking. One could counter argue with him that iconography would have as its high artistic values *spiritual* values, even if western art did not exist at all. Juxtaposing western art with iconography as Florensky proposed might have been an original method for his own time but sadly it turned into an obsolete pattern later in the 20th century.

However, after considering Father Pavel's negative attitude to western art it is only fair to mention that Florensky was acquainted with the representatives of the Russian avant-garde and their work. He could not ignore the experience of contemporary art in Russia, which was neither western nor mimetic. His views were close to those of Kandinsky's views on the concept of the spiritual in art, but on the more technical side of the theory they did not have much to share. Florensky, focused as he was on the particular task of rediscovering the ancient and authentic iconography, was bound to place his emphasis on the *theurgic* nature of the Church and include artistic activity in it, while Kandinsky's views were more inspired by Soloviev's *theurgic* vision of artistic activity *per se* which itself embraced the Church the other way round.

1.6.3. Leonide Ouspensky[72] dedicated two volumes to the specific subject of the rediscovery of authentic iconography and the theological meaning of icons. He, like Khomiakov, regards authentic Orthodox values as essential to the Russian identity and culture and therefore, regards the turn towards authentic iconography not as "a rediscovery but a return to the icon".[73]

Ouspensky states that by tolerating the so called Italian style in Orthodox churches "we also

[72] 1902–1987.
[73] Ouspensky 1992, 470.

introduce a teaching foreign to orthodoxy and a falsified understanding of spiritual experience, of holiness".[74] Ouspensky, like Slavophiles, saw in the uniqueness of Russian culture a potential of offering something to the world. His quotation of Henry Matisse is first of all directed to the Russian westernizers who saw their own cultural identity as inferior to the West: "The Russians have no idea of the artistic treasures they possess", said Matisse, "Your young students have here, at home, art models that are incomparably better than those from abroad. French painters should come and study in Russia. In this field, Italy offers less".[75]

In that light Ouspensky takes a rhetorical path of overemphasizing the Russian superiority over the Western art. He blames western Christianity for rejecting the sense of the divine in its art since the Renaissance: the illusionary portrayal of the visible word became a goal in itself. Western artists conceived the unrepresentable in the same categories as the depictable. The language of symbolic realism disappeared, and the message of Christianity became humanized. The '*mimesis* (imitation) of life' invaded art in the period of Renaissance. The cult of the flesh replaced the transfiguration of the human body at the inspiration of pagan antiquity; the eschatological perspective of the synergism between God and man became suppressed and distorted.[76] Ouspensky emphasized the power of theological distortion that western influences enjoyed when applied to iconography. He suggested that "all naturalism and all psychology in the icon not only falsifies Orthodox teaching, but also obstructs our contact with the sacred".[77] In the scale of contest, Ouspensky regarded Western art much inferior to authentic and specifically Russian iconography. He affirmed the official position of the Moscow Patriarchate of his time that the realistic trend in art was "spiritual milk for the simple people".[78]

The blame obviously fell on the Roman Catholic Church that allowed its art to lose the ascetic spirit of Christian symbolism. Ouspensky even condemns modern Roman Catholicism for welcoming modern art, for he believes that "having repudiated the ancient universe of forms and concepts, this art has arrived at a fragmentation that results in

[74] Ouspensky 1978, 216.
[75] Matisse, quoted by Ouspensky 1992, 459.
[76] Ouspensky, 1992, 488.
[77] Ouspensky 1978, 217.
[78] Journal of Moscow Patriarchate, no 1, (1961), quoted by L. Ouspensky1992, 472.

disintegration and sometimes blasphemy".[79] As already mentioned Ouspensky is not the only anti-western writer in this circumstance; the attitude understandably accompanies the works of all the three aforementioned Russian writers of the time.

Ouspensky like the others does not select a particular period in the history of western art, but discusses all art at once since The Renaissance. The Russian theologians seem to be overlooking the fact that the damage of so called westernization in iconography first resulted from the departure from the theological meaning of iconography, and giving the icon a somewhat pop-cultural status. Some cheap western influences only came through a door already widely open and welcoming to anything of a lesser value.[80] Moreover, the westernization of icons was not initiated by Westerners but by Russian artists such as Vrubel, Vasentsov and Nesterov who were confused between their own ecclesiastical consciousness and the social trend of the time.

Ouspensky is right, however, when he blames the Westernized Russian iconographers for confusing the sacred with the secular. He is quite right in noting that the evil lay precisely in the absence of separation: "While becoming secular, art still pretended to be religious".[81] The process taking place in sacred art was certainly not an evolution of religious painting. The problem was not that secular art existed but the problem emerged precisely from the fact that liturgical art was threatened by being secularized.

It also has to be mentioned that Ouspensky also writes from the perspective of a professional iconographer. The icons attributed to his brush possess exceptionally high artistic value as well as very profound sacred expression.[82] Therefore, it is obvious that Ouspensky's negativity towards western style also derives from his position as an iconographer who reminds himself and other iconographers that there are elements to be avoided when one desires to paint icons.

1.6.4. Photios Kontoglou[83]

The process of rediscovering traditional iconography involved the same negativity towards western art in Greece. The famous Greek writer, painter and philosopher Photios Kontoglou

[79] Ouspensky 1992, 490.
[80] Ouspensky describes the tendency of cheapening the value of icons in the 17th century before westernization took over in Russia, Ouspensky 1992, 334.
[81] Ouspensky 1992, 361.
[82] Illustration №9.
[83] 1895- 1965.

dedicated enormous effort toward reviving traditional iconography and, at the same time, revitalising traditional ecclesiastical consciousness. Kontoglou also judged the value of iconography against the lower quality of western art in general, and rarely targets one particular period in art history. The fact that Kontoglou himself was trained as an artist in Paris before he started developing his anti-western aesthetic approach while valuing authentic style of iconography implies to his own personal search for identity. Search for his own roots as a Greek Orthodox reveals side by side with his search for the authentic elements in Liturgical art. Kontoglou is also critical of the Greek artists who adopted "the lowest form of painting"[84] of Western artistic origin, and introduced them in post-Byzantine iconography. Kontoglou blames the Renaissance artists for corrupting Byzantine iconography, even though some of the artists he criticises are Greeks: Vryzakis, Byzantios, and probably their distant predecessor Panagiotis Doxaras,[85] the founder of the Cretan school of iconography. Yet, the reader cannot always be sure if they are the objects of Kontoglou's criticism, or whether he in fact denounces the whole of western painting as such.[86] It is even harder to distinguish who are the specific artists on either side of his argument as he judges "the poverty of modern art in comparison with the wealth and the originality possessed by works of tradition".[87] Kontoglou shares the same objection with his Russian co-thinkers about the earthliness of mimetic representation in sacred art. He also fears the visual deception of mimetic presentation "making one think that the object depicted is real, not a painting".[88] The real problem that Kontoglou sees in mimetic representation is that western art defeats the objectives of sacred art that is "spiritual beauty, the holy, the divine, whereas the objective of secular art is physical beauty, or the creations of human imagination".[89] Kontoglou takes it for granted that the aim of every western art that experiments with the imagination must be "merely to entertain, whereas the aim of spiritual art is to awaken spiritually and to sanctify"[90]. In the Russian sphere, there was an identified problem concerning the differentiation between sacred and secular art. For Kontoglou even that differentiation does not seem quite satisfactory as an approach to

[84] Kontoglou 2004, 27.
[85] Panagiotis Doxaras (1662- 1729) established the Cretan school of iconography imitating in his art Italian style, particularly the paintings of Veronese.
[86] The problem may also be caused by the quality of the only available English translation of his writings by C. Cavarnos who himself takes an extreme critical approach to western art. Illustration №10.
[87] Kontoglou 2004, 41.
[88] Kontoglou 2004, 40.
[89] Kontoglou 2004, 29.
[90] Kontoglou 2004, 29.

the problem. Sacred and secular arts themselves for Kontoglou differ in form, content, and function: "The forms of sacred art are hieractic, mystical, anagogic, and aimed at lifting the mind from the material to the spiritual plane" while the aim of secular art is mere entertainment and therefore cannot be looked at seriously from the perspective of faith.[91] His view clearly contrasts with Dostoyevsky's approach to the great masterpieces of western art.

Kontoglou also, like the Russian authors, regards tradition as the cornerstone of a true artistic expression and a foundation and power "for living souls; dead souls cannot be saved and enlivened by tradition or anything else".[92] Kontoglou shares their conviction that standing outside the tradition makes one empty and spiritually dead and "even with tradition such individuals cannot create anything significant".[93] Kontoglou sees a western-minded iconographer desiring to discard the tradition out of arrogance and disobedience in the hope of doing "certain miracles".[94] Kontoglou finds authentic freedom accessible only within the frames of the tradition, whereas, he sees the creativity of a few Florentine individuals as the abuse of freedom by imposing their personal interests and desires on others through their work. Freedom for Kontoglou obviously entails freedom from error and finding safety within the conventional limits, which he regards as tradition. He only expects a true artist to repeat what has already been made. According to Kontoglou the Modernists are "ever chattering that they want freedom in order to make new things, are in reality certain weak creatures under the sway of fantasies".[95] Whereas, the true freedom is to be found only in obedience to tradition which is passed from generation to generation. This passive handing on of experience and knowledge in Kontoglou's view means breathing "the true air of freedom, emancipated from the passions of display, egoism and the desire to impose his own personal feelings [as it is] in the case of secular art".[96] Kontoglou's use of the term 'secular art' stands for Western art ing general, and his version of tradition almost implies a kind of shelter, behind which one can easily hide one's own personality. At the same time curiously enough, Kontoglou also claims that it is essential for an iconographer to be highly original, but their originality is revealed on a spiritual

[91] Kontoglou 2004, 30.
[92] Kontoglou 2004, 29.
[93] Kontoglou 2004, 37.
[94] Kontoglou 2004, 40.
[95] Kontoglou 2004, 36.
[96] Kontoglou 2004, 61.

level[97] and not visual. He finds elusive a certain "special pulsation, which every epoch gives to the works of the Tradition … It does not come from certain evident innovations, but exists in the character of the work".[98] Kontoglou leaves us in the dark about the ways of revealing and perceiving this special pulsation precisely in painting and not in some more abstract and immaterial forms of art. Instead of explaining it further he does not spare his resentment and even sarcasm towards an original artists "the stranger the invention, the more important is the artist who made it!", [99] who "…busy themselves to discover that which is before the eye of everyone, as if each person is not capable of seeing it by himself. It is as if the whole of mankind was blind before these artists made their appearance".[100] Kontoglou more explicitly than any other Orthodox writers criticises artistic individuality, which he believes "has been the great error of the Western World".[101]

Kontoglou's excessive negativity would be understandable in the case of application to those artists who threatened traditional iconography by introducing the alien elements to it. However, there is always a certain vagueness in his writing about the object of his rage. Kontoglou does not make it clear whether he limits his attack specifically to Greek iconographers or to the western artists' freedom of expression that he finds totally unacceptable. He may be right in arguing that individual artistic expression involves dangers, as does everything else, but it is curious that Kontoglou, himself a painter, emphasises to the extreme the point of individual expression in art as the most threatening factor that turned upside down the whole history of western art. He seem to be ignoring a positive possibility of the same enterprise. He believes that the tradition is that safe space that protects one from getting lost in his own fallen self and even more from transmitting his fallen desires to others. Even the naturalistic depiction is wrong for Kontoglou for its reliance on the subjective vision of an individual. The aesthetic value of art is part of that artistic approach that he believes built up the tower of Babel.[102] When it comes to the aesthetic side many art critics would agree with Kontoglou that there is an element of fragmentation and separation in modern western art. Yet, unlike others Kontoglou sees this fragmentation and separation not in stylistic terms or in the nature of the work but in the

[97] Kontoglou 2004, 66-67.
[98] Kontoglou 2004, 67.
[99] Kontoglou 2004, 40.
[100] Kontoglou 2004, 40.
[101] Kontoglou 2004, 49-50.
[102] Kontoglou 2004, 39.

fact that painting and sculpture have been separated from architecture, music from speech, architecture from site, and all have been separated from the one and eternal rhythm. In other words, Kontoglou seems to be concerned more about the de-synthesizing of arts than about art having gone astray from wholeness into particulars.

Summary

It seems that the Greek Kontoglou was not personally acquainted with the Russian thinkers writing on the same subject; at any rate, until much later when his ideas were fully formed. However, it is clear that they all share the same concerns although in two different countries. Their focus on the rediscovery of their own traditional authentic religious art forced them to overstress the 'evil' of Western art as an entity that rejected the spirit of authentic art. Analyzing the writings by all four authors clarified three major points they all make in a very specific context: that of introducing western artistic elements into the Orthodox Christian art. They all point to three aspects that they find unacceptable in orthodox worship:

1. The illusionism and naturalism of Western art is in opposition with Orthodox Christian spirituality, which sees the authentic image of the world as incorporeal, and thus cannot limit its depiction to the world affected by the consequences of the fall.

2. The subjectivity of the Western artist who stands out and seeks freedom from the tradition.

3. Aesthetic appreciation of art for its sensual beauty that is opposed to the Orthodox Christian idea of the authentic beauty that is the truth discernable only through prayerful contemplation.

These three points express the reasons why Orthodox theologians reject western influence in iconography, but the same points are equally crucial in causing a misunderstanding of western art in general by subsequent generations of Orthodox scholars. Ever since the time of the controversy over the Nikonian reforms, the question of westernization of iconography was more complex than categorizing the two styles into good and bad. As Ouspensky rightly pointed out "this new art, on the one hand, caused a blind infatuation and, on the other, provoked an equally blind opposition".[103] Some faithful must have

[103] Ouspensky 1992, 367.

detected an alien spirit in the invading influence but they would not always know the true reasons for their protest against it. Orthodox theologians still find themselves sometimes fighting blindly, "employing Protestant arguments in their struggle against Catholicism, and Roman Catholic ones in their struggle against Protestantism".[104] Ouspensky wisely discerns also that this controversy on the subject of art produced in the Orthodox "a kind of 'inferiority complex' toward western art, and uprooted it for a long time from its living, creative tradition".[105] However, Ouspensky would probably disagree with the idea that this inferiority complex is revealed forcefully nowadays in modern Orthodox attempts to debase western art *per se* and affirm their own general superiority over the West. The modern outlook on western art appears somewhat challenging to the objections against western art and its potentials, which the theologians of the last century employed for encouraging the appreciation icons among the faithful. The three points made by the great thinkers of the last century are the subject of exploration in the following chapters of this thesis.

1.7. More recent developments of Orthodox thought about the subject of western art[106]

The generation of Orthodox Christian thinkers following the earlier four theologians already discussed saw the same polarization in Western Europe as well as in Greece and Russia. This divergence in opinion continues even to the present day. The conventionally traditional approach relies on the arguments of those who tend to apply the idea of divinely originated creativity exclusively to iconography for its exceptional ability to express the dogma of the Church. Unfortunately, this view is usually more vocal and popular in modern Orthodox thought, since it is more determined to lay stress on the importance of the 'spiritual' as opposed to the sensual. Ouspensky's stress on western art as a threat to the Orthodox tradition has obviously impressed many modern Orthodox believers who are prepared to believe that western art has been, and has to be, a threat to the Church no matter which period in western art they are talking about. In modern times, it has almost become a fashion in certain quarters to consider western art as some kind of complementary dark background that only emphasises the higher value of iconography. However, the degree of conventionalism in the Orthodox approach to art obviously varies in our times from the extremely conservative to the relatively casual.

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] The account of the variety of views of the Russian Intellectuals in the Soviet Union and Russian émigrés in the West see in appendix to chapter 1.

The thoughts of Philip Sherrard, who came to lead a rather strict life isolated from the world of modern technology, presents an interesting case in this regard. Sherrard also bases his views of mimetic representation on a rather Platonic view of the world and its eternal being. However, Sherrard finds it possible to open up the real world through artistic representation. He sees human cooperation as a key-factor in unveiling the divine energies hidden in every object. He is right in thinking that "material objects, remain in bondage, atrophied, stagnant, frustrated, unless they are animated by human sympathy and love". The material world comes to fruition and fulfilment only through human perception: "It is through man as the knowing subject that they are felt, imagined and sanctified".[107] Sherrard's appreciation of the potential of art finds its limitation when the individual artist creator comes into the discussion. Sherrard distinguishes between the two types of art: "A work of art which can bring us to the threshold of mystery is not the same as a sacred work of art, which discloses the mystery itself and makes us share in it".[108] Therefore Sherrard also, in spite of his open-minded vision of artistic ability to discern and convey the divine, also creates a specific context for art. He, like the theologians earlier discussed, expects true art to convey the dogmatic mystery of a religious tradition rather than allowing a personal search for it. The preference of the artist/technician over the artist/inventor is obviously derived from the suspicion that a fallen individual cannot create a work of universal merit. For Sherrard the fallenness of human being automatically implies the inability of the individual to attune to God, for such fallenness makes humans "victims of our limited intelligence, our hallucinatory imagination, our unstable emotions, our own purely individual and subjective reactions to what we perceive or come into contact with".[109] Sherrard firmly believes that fallen and especially modern man is not to be trusted when it comes to initiating a sacred work. The only option for an individual who wishes to create in this fallen world is to develop what amounts to a rather monstrous image in his thought: "The deep seated amoralism of the human being, his internal chaos, is now unleashed by the irresistible and seductive power of the aesthetic impulses of the soul; and the images that they project into the imagination, far from having anything sacred about them, represent more and more an ontological perversion, a lack of coincidence between divine archetype and visible form, a dissolution of the bond uniting the divine and the

[107] Sherrard 1990, 12.
[108] Sherrard 1990, 16
[109] Sherrard 1990, 14.

human, the uncreated and the created".[110] Sherrard, as we have seen, is not negative about art as such, but in his vision art is only sacred and sacred art exists merely within the religious community. He believes that only those whose inner world is animated by God can fulfil the priest-like task: "It is only when we can contemplate in ourselves the wisdom of God, the beauty of the poetic essences of the universe, and in their light recognize their counterparts or equivalents hidden beneath the outward appearance of things, that we can reveal to these things their eternal being and bring this being to fruition".[111] Sherrard acknowledges the religious presence in artistic experience, however, he is not sure that it can be obtained outside the boundaries of tradition. Sherrard's rather dualistic views on art present him as a struggling convert to Orthodox faith, someone who can see the value of true art and yet cannot hide his own guilt for admiring it for its being left outside the Orthodox Church.

Another fundamental piece of research dedicated to the theology of art from an Orthodox perspective also comes as a comparative study between eastern and western artistic choices. Andreas Andreopoulos' book *Art as Theology* represents one of the contemporary studies on the separation between the western and eastern artistic traditions. He bases his anti-western artistic arguments on the negative influence that he believes comes from the Renaissance. Andreopoulos describes the fallen tendencies of the Renaissance art that withdrew from medieval spirituality and started a secular era in the history of art. He sees art since the Renaissance becoming "a little independent Universe and the author poses as its Creator".[112] Andreopoulos, follows the pattern developed by the earlier theologians. He sees the problems of western art precisely in the same points that the four theologians made earlier. He, unlike them, develops his arguments with more support from western sources but like them he also sees three major problems brought by Renaissance art. The first is the problem of mimetic representation of western art that he sees as their failure to look beyond the appearance: "The icon was attempting to capture the identity instead of the surface".[113] He argues that a superficial religiosity in the Renaissance brought a "change of locus of spiritual activity from Heaven to earth"[114] placing the human values at the centre of attention. Renaissance in this picture is seen to be guilty of "the withdrawal of spirituality

[110] Ibid.
[111] Sherrard 1990, 13.
[112] Andreopoulos 2006, 105.
[113] Andreopoulos 2006, 91.
[114] Andreopoulos 2006, 93.

in favour of the independence of the artwork".[115] The West replaced the notion of devotion with the concept of artistic creativity itself and spiritual values with the emphasis on the beauty of the human body. It has to be said that Andreopoulos is addressing a western society that takes the history of Byzantine iconography as only a period in art history. He attempts to reveal the continuity of the sacred artistic tradition that still exists today in the form of liturgical art. He considers medieval art as the origin of the sacred Christian tradition, betrayal of which caused Western art to experience a certain spiritual crisis since the Renaissance. He believes that the foundation of formal art history is "[the] death of art as we know it, and its reincarnation as a spiritual practice: something that, in different ways, was part of medieval aesthetics".[116] In other words Andreopoulos' vision of the resurrection of art lies in its return to medieval spirituality. Andreopoulos is perplexed by the death of art in the West. He admits that some sort of art will always exist and in that sense art is never going to disappear, but in the death of art he considers the death of the sacred in the art that fails to nourish the earth with spiritual values. He ends his optimistic message by suggesting some tendencies towards the recovery of medieval spirituality in contemporary culture by incorporating the elements of sacred art into modern non-liturgical art. However the author somewhat limits the area of such opportunities only to those artists who lead 'profoundly religious' lives.

The second point is precisely the problem of an individual creator at the heart of his creation, unlike the Orthodox iconographer who even hides his own identity. Andreopoulos also like many others sees the problem of western art in the human ego standing at the centre of artistic expression, which appears to him ultimately responsible for the breakaway from tradition. He recalls the image of an artist in the East who was seen as "only a medium of divine expression and not a creator in the modern sense".[117] Creativity, Andreopoulos believes, is not essential for the iconographer who does not compose the work by his own initiative or conception, but "merely removes the covers from the already existing and unique image. He does not superimpose the paint on the canvas, but as it were clears away its extraneous coatings: the incrustations concealing its spiritual reality".[118] The theological task of a religious artist was clear: "to represent theology in a precise way

[115] Andreopoulos 2006, 63.
[116] Andreopoulos, 2006, 6.
[117] Ibid, 22.
[118] Florensky, quoted by Adnreopoulos, 2006, 23.

that would reflect religious orthodoxy, a concern shared by modern iconographers in exactly the same way". [119] Andreopoulos, like Sherrard, gives a rather unattractive image of the western artist as opposed to the traditional iconographer. While an iconographer is serving as an instrument in God's hands, the secular artist is immersed in his carnal passions and transmits them to the viewer. Andreopoulos, distinguishes the natures of their passions: "The passion of the painting is the passion of absence, whereas the passion of the medieval icon was the passion of presence"[120] comparing the passion of absence with fetishism.[121] He is certainly right in suggesting that "The Painting becomes a mirror of the passion of the viewer, as it was a mirror of the passion of Leonardo himself". [122] However, the vision of a pornographic image[123] in 'Mona Lisa'[124] can easily exceed the expectations of its maker. The reason why Andreopoulos locates the beginning of contemporary pornography in the Renaissance paradigm shift, is that "It exploits, in a way, the sexual mystery of the surface and its appeal, and at the same time it signifies the lack of true contact between the passionate, narcissistic viewer and the woman on the canvas". [125] This statement reveals more about the emotional state of the viewer than about the artist.

Orthodox authors including Andreas Andreopoulos often see a certain opposition between the theology of art and aesthetics, suggesting the latter to be inferior to the former. The meaning of the icon is not as an artwork that should be preserved in museums, rather it is a depiction of the living God and the saints and its function is liturgical. The icon is created for prayer; it is only "a point of departure for divine contemplation". [126] Andreopoulos makes a distinction between St Augustine's concept of *anima rationalis* and the hesychast idea of deification through the journey towards one's absolute centre and uniting intellect with one's heart in terms of journey towards inner unity. He suggests that Western art developed since The Renaissance a certain inner disunity by turning away from God. He points to two different purposes in the art of the Renaissance: "The first corresponds to the purpose of art to instruct, to stir the religious emotions of people, and to inspire feelings of devotion. The second was oriented towards a more abstract, "pure" aestheticism that was

[119] Ibid, 21.
[120] Andreopoulos 2006, 86.
[121] Andreopoulos 2006, 121.
[122] Andreopoulos 2006, 86.
[123] Andreopoulos 2006, 86.
[124] Illustration №14.
[125] Andreopoulos 2006,.86.
[126] Andreopoulos 2006, 25.

oblivious to the spiritual content of the work of art".[127] Andreopoulos is concerned with the absence of any theological foundation for religious art where pure aestheticism takes over. Contemplation of the icon on the contrary is a personal practice that he compares to liturgical practice rather than to artistic enjoyment and appreciation. "In that sense", he says, "theology incorporates the study of beauty as a concept subject to theological doctrine"[128]. One of the reasons of his negative response to the aesthetic perception of the icon is linked back to the devastating impact that westernization had on Byzantine iconography in Greece as well as in Russia. He even sees the artistic value of icons as a problem, one of the factors of which was "an increasing Western influence, evident in the taste and the art of the upper classes, whereas the simple people still followed the Byzantine iconographic style".[129] Andreopoulos translates the fashionable acceptance of westernization in Greece as classification of people's spirituality according to which class they belong to rather than describing their common taste. He generally associates the existence of aesthetic taste with the demands of upper class society. Andreopoulos goes even so far as to argue that taste is not important to iconography, when he places iconography next to kitsch from the aesthetic perspective.[130] He argues that both iconography and kitsch "fulfil the need that has little to do with art and with appreciation of art, but is more of emotional and psychological nature, rather than of aesthetic and cultural".[131]

Andreopoulos takes a rather traditionalist path while viewing western art as secularized by the loss of the "essentially spiritual nature and function of art".[132] The ideal for him is found in Byzantine spirituality conveyed through art. "The sacred art of the East was, and still is, informed and engendered by religion".[133] He believes that "a development of art in such terms would accept and encourage any changes that would allow art to perform its religious role better".[134] He sees the secular orientation of the West as "a sterile path that separated the intellect from the heart, something that would inevitably produce the

[127] Andreopoulos 2006, 135.
[128] Andreopoulos 2006, 21.
[129] Andreopoulos 2006, 67.
[130] Andreopoulos 2006, 119.
[131] Andreopoulos 2006, 119.
[132] Andreopoulos 2006, 63.
[133] Andreopoulos 2006, 64.
[134] Andreopoulos 2006, 64.

problems that brought about the discourse on the death of (secular) art". [135] Andreopoulos is right in suggesting that "For more than a century the West has not been creating a 'religious art' in the traditional sense of the term, that is to say, an art reflecting 'classic' religious conceptions". [136] Yet, like the other theologians, he does not seem to be concerned with the social and political reasons that caused the change along with theological reasons. In spite of his attempt to prioritize the spirituality of liturgical and non-liturgical arts, Andreopoulos rightly discerns that even iconography belongs to the material world. We need any art because 'we are not strong enough to face the world without it, which according to the religious tradition, we only do it now "through a glass darkly"'. [137]

Probably the most extreme views on the subject of western art belong to Archimandrite Raphael Karelin. His article on icons is solely dedicated to condemnations of Western art and every individual creative activity. Karelin sees Renaissance art as a revival of immorality and paganism. The Renaissance art works he regards as perfect on a human level but spiritually blind, immersed in materialism, heaviness of earthly forms and passion that he finds unacceptable for any Christian. He sees the difference between eastern and western art in a rather black and white mode and expresses his views more sharply than any of his predecessors. He, like all the previous theologians, also believes that "The West, since it broke the dogmatic unity with the Eastern Church, has lost the mystically discerning perception of the spiritual world that is characteristic for the undivided ancient Church. This perception has been replaced with a mimetic picture on a visual level". [138] For Karelin the major crime of the Renaissance consists in its denial of Church symbolism that unites all. Instead he believes that abstract art is "an inner explosion, It is the prediction of the future cataclysms and disasters". [139] The author fails to deny that there is something prophetic in 'abstract art'. However, he sees something demonic in it rather than divine and positive: "This is an escape, it is the poetry of darkness, chaos and madness; it is a poetry of disaster". [140] The archimandrite informs us that this is why the abstract painting will "never become Church art, it will never be able to carry and reflect Church symbolism". [141] His

[135] Andreopoulos 2006, 64.
[136] Eliade quoted by Andreopoulos 2006, 131.
[137] Andreopoulos 2006, 90.
[138] Karelin, 1981, 128.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.

determined and aggressive tone against western art obviously carries the suggestion that secular painting is trying to claim a place in liturgical practice. It also has to be noted that Karelin's understanding of abstract art is somewhat different from what is usually meant by abstract art. His negativity equally applies to the aesthetic element involved in art. He totally opposes sensual to spiritual experience: "Abstract art works only through passions, which it even transforms into aesthetical feelings. Passion can lead us to the state of certain almost ecstatic inspiration but these ecstasies will not be purification but arousal of body and blood, which we, by deceiving ourselves will take as a spiritual state".[142] Karelin stresses the sensual nature of western art as the main danger for the Orthodox.

This fundamentalist approach obviously cannot express the voice of the Church even if it supported by the priestly rank, as the very attitude by no means matches the spirit and the commandments of the Gospel. Yet the sad truth is that this voice sometimes takes over among the faithful and sounds louder in the life of the Church.

The most recent publication on the subject of western art presents an Orthodox clergyman and a thinker in a dialogue with a Roman Catholic priest. *The Sailors of the Sky* brings in the answers to the same questions from the Orthodox and Roman Catholic perspectives. Father Stamatis Skliris also starts by considering western art as focused on this corruptible world, unlike iconography. An Orthodox Bishop writing the afterword of the book also supports his argument: "An image that does not refer to the person of Christ is an image that refers to the corrupted world and thus leads to death"[143] Whereas, the icon is "not of this world".[144] Nevertheless, they both believe that "the icon is distinct from the truth, not because it is false, delusional, or fantastic, but because it borrows its means of expression from still-corruptible nature".[145] Skliris is open to the idea that the icon as well as any other form of art is still within the boundaries of this corruptible world. He believes that the very existence of art "is a gaze of a man who has fallen deeply into sin, and, while he is looking at me, an existential earthquake is taking place inside him. He yearns for forgiveness, for holiness, for union with the community of the Holy Ones and with God".[146] He sees the very need for art as a longing for the divine grace: "We could say that the more sin is

[142] Karelin, 1981, 132.
[143] Bish. Maxim, afterword to Skliris, 2010, 88.
[144] Bish. Maxim, Skliris 2010, 88.
[145] Bish. Maxim, Skliris 2010, 89.
[146] Skliris 2010, 64.

multiplied, the more the longing within man increases, the longing for a thorough, ontological change. Lust for life, which is a lust for pleasure, contains in itself the lust for death. There appear fear and an unquenchable desire for the resurrection. At that moment the Orthodox icon encounters modern man".[147] Unlike western art, "ecclesiastical painting has in it a certain ontological originality".[148] Unlike Andreopoulos, who rightly claims that iconography is not just a period in the history of art, Skliris rather impulsively implies that the iconic form of expression might change and transform in the future within the Orthodox tradition. He believes that even though the Byzantine icon is certainly the most superb pictorial expression of the Christian faith, "we should be open-minded and open to the idea that in the future other Christian people, if they lived the Orthodox faith in an authentic way, will be able to find equally valuable pictorial and iconographic expressions and solutions".[149] Skliris attempts to be open-minded about western art by allowing a place for western influences in Orthodox iconography. He proposes that no iconographer should ignore and disregard the great achievements of western art such as Impressionism. He suggests that every Christian, who is moved by love, cares and shows interest in the problems that preoccupy his fellow men.[150] Skliris claims that iconography is painting at its most significant. He rightly notes that "since the earliest times of cave painting, painting has, by depicting a being, rescued it from oblivion, given him a sort of immortality, because a work of art cannot be lost and forgotten". [151] However, he also, like some others, attributes its supreme expression to iconography and regards it as "an art above all others, painting par excellence".[152] He makes a parallel between an icon, which "is a painting that iconizes beings the way they are going to be in the future" and secular painting that depicts objects "in the way they were in the past".[153] Skliris believes that even among the Western masterpieces, "there are works of art that are painted as secular, but incline toward the icon and are in fact very close to an icon".[154] Curiously enough, Skliris discerns something iconic not in the expression, nor in the atmosphere of a particular painting, but in "a still life by van Gogh, in which the depicted garlic shines with a light that seems incorruptible";

[147] Skliris 2010, 41.
[148] Skliris 2010, 8.
[149] Skliris 2010 ,57.
[150] Skliris 2010, 25.
[151] Skliris 2010, 33.
[152] Skliris 2010, 33.
[153] Skliris 2010, 31.
[154] Skliris 2010, 32.

[155] believing that the shiny garlic "functions within the logic system of the icon".[156] Skliris' desire to appear as tolerant and unprejudiced about western art must spring from his reasonable concern about excessive negativity on the part of earlier Orthodox scholars towards it and his intuitive wish to find a positive element in western art. He suggests that "instead of claiming that iconography has no relationship to painting, it is better to say that it is a form of painting that saves painting, because it succeeds in achieving the great aims of painting throughout time".[157] However, the only explanation he offers is that an icon leads us to the Kingdom of Heaven and "The Gospel does this too, because it is gold or silver, and because it looks like a book that is different from all the other books we read".[158] Skliris points out that artistic inspiration is found only in rare moments of creativity; it "does not express an artist's skilfulness, but his sensitivity".[159] Skliris as an Orthodox clergyman sees the access to the divine inspiration only in those who have cultivated the sense of holiness in their hearts: "Only holiness can attract the divine grace that is necessary for a genuinely authentic theology and authentic art".[160]

Another aspect where Skliris lets iconography compete with western art is in the originality of an artist. He starts by stating the common view that ecclesiastical painting and icon painting obey the canons of ecclesiastical tradition, while secular painting is free to depict things as the artist wishes. He sees an icon's freedom as an "ontological freedom, that is freedom from the laws of nature, which are the laws that lead to corruptibility".[161] He points out a rather unexplained kind of freedom in the case of an icon painter: "the icon painter is a painter who, while painting, is constantly innovating, having freedom in painting methods and manners".[162] He believes that it is only during the last two centuries that "Orthodox ecclesiastical painting has not been characterized by this authenticity and originality",[163] while originality was one of the major drives for a Byzantine iconographer. He formulates his understanding of originality: "if 'original' stands for the synthesis between the objectivity of the divine revelation and our acceptance of it, then original is a

[155] Ibid.
[156] Skliris 2010, 32.
[157] Skliris 2010, 35.
[158] Skliris 2010, 40.
[159] Skliris 2010, 64.
[160] Skliris 2010, 52.
[161] Skliris 2010, 31.
[162] Skliris 2010, .9.
[163] Ibid.

dynamic relationship between Christ, Who is revealed and celebrated in the Church's liturgy, and our reception of Him, our perception and proclamation of salvation".[164] Here we also encounter confusion between the idea of originality with the idea of priestly duty of performing the sacrament on behalf of all the faithful. Skliris overlooks the fact that the priestly task does not aim at being original and this fact does not belittle its value in any way.

However, Skliris is perfectly right when he discerns a certain crisis in modern iconography, which he suggests is ontological and not aesthetic. He rightly assumes that the error of the modern icon painter lies precisely in the fact that he is in search of originality, he is looking for an "aesthetical freedom rather than ontological one".[165]

Fr Stamatis' desire for open-mindedness leads him even further in getting into competition with western art on the points which he believes are wrongly judged as different from iconography. He sees the Western modernism as not a result but a "reaction to the Renaissance".[166] Skliris supposes that art historians failed to notice that Modernism in fact started way back centuries before when "the first Early Christians started painting catacombs, they adopted the existing artistic ideas from Greco-roman art, which were a continuation of Classical Greek art".[167] Especially concerning the expression of the eyes he believes that "This bold and daring step that Christians took in ecclesiastical art was modernism before Modernism".[168] Therefore "it does not have any reason to envy Western Modernism, since it already had it".[169] Here Skliris, in spite of his attempt not to do so, is clearly mistaking modernism as a tendency for Modernism as a movement.

Skliris rightly connects the difference between western and eastern artistic perception to the difference between their theologies: "Western theology is historical and ethical, and eastern is more mystical and spiritual".[170] "Eastern painting is more inspired by the Resurrection, and Western, it seems, more by the Cross and Passion of our Lord".[171] However, he does not limit his criticism to Western European art alone but, like Kontoglou and Cavarnos, he

[164] Skliris 2010, 27.
[165] Skliris 2010, 11.
[166] Skliris 2010, 21.
[167] Skliris 2010, 23.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Skliris 2010, 24.
[170] Skliris 2010, 49.
[171] Skliris 2010, 72.

expresses his doubts about even Russian art, in which he sees the danger of falling into too much sentimentalism unlike Greek art.[172] The sophisticated lyrical expression found in authentic Russian icons seems to have appeared to him as too sensitive for Greek taste and therefore influenced by the western stress on the passion of the Cross.

However, the mockery of western art became traditional some time after the Orthodox theologians pointed to its harmful outcome when it was necessary. The latest discussions also show that the Orthodox world is still struggling to recover from the harm that westernization afflicted on its liturgical artistic legacy. However, the patristic thought in the early centuries was known not for taking a safe path but precisely in proclaiming the truth no matter how unconventional and shocking it might have looked in their days.

1.8. Vision of art in a broader context: continuing the line of patristic thought

A few modern theologians in the west as well as in Russia take the path of freedom from prejudices and conventionalism and ground their arguments solely on the truth of the Church rather than on a particular period in the Church history. They are often called liberals for their openness to divinely inspired creativity as a universal phenomenon and allowing it to embrace the whole of the human race rather than attributing it to the Orthodox Church alone. The conservatives may even see their openness as ecumenically minded and slightly betraying the tradition, but in fact these views in modern Orthodox legacy originate from the religious thoughts of Vladimir Soloviev who was acquainted with western philosophy and still remained an Orthodox Christian. An interest in western philosophy can make one western only as much as reading pagan philosophy could make the fathers of the Church pagan. There was a time when icons were not 'Orthodox' at all and the Church had to develop a sense of the truly Orthodox value of artistic expression in general. It has been almost a part of the patristic tradition in the history of the Orthodox Church to speak up about a particular subject when it poses a threat or a problem for the faithful. Unlike the negative attitude towards western art, the contribution of the positive approach to the subject is much more modest and gentle. These Orthodox clergymen and thinkers rarely see the need to dedicate a vast work on the subject, which they naturally see as agreeable and straightforward. Therefore, the affirmative voices in the Orthodox sources can be found spread in few sentences or articles rather than as a subject of major research.

[172] Skliris 2010, 51.

Prof Andrew Louth saw a need to suggest a positive way of viewing western art without seeing it as an obstacle and even approaching it as an aid in the process of spiritual contemplation. Louth points out individual creativity as the specific feature conceived and developed by western art. He admits that "the notion of creativity in the west is not innocent. It is part of a development that substitutes the individual for God".[173] However, he wonders if it is appropriate for Orthodox Christians to follow the western interpretation of individual creativity which tends to focus on the artist's inner self as the active agent and get involved in a 'higher gossip' about the complexities of a particular artist's inner state. He wisely offers an alternative way of looking into the Byzantine rejection of iconoclasm, wondering if that can offer an Orthodox understanding of an artist as a creator. Louth directs the reader to the iconoclastic council 754 refuted by the seventh council of Nicea. Iconoclasts firmly believed that an image was devoid of sacredness and was worthless and common as the painter made it. The Church on the other hand saw a painter as one who was made as an image-making being: we were made to create. Therefore, Louth suggests the development of a certain sense of objectivity, by focusing on the creative process as a God-given gift and a process that is more important than what the artist thought he wanted to create. "Artistic creation", he argues, "is within the realm of the sacred".[174] An icon is holy not because of who made it, but precisely because it discloses the image of the One who is Holy, it makes the Holy One its subject. Louth also rightly points out that one of the characteristic results of the fall is the fragmentation of the world resulting in isolation, loneliness and sorrow. He looks back at St John of Damascus who states that the harmony of the cosmos has been restored through the incarnation that showed the way to healing. Louth also rightly discerns that the fascinating artistic vision of a great artist can be very appealing but a spectator does not always know what to relate this fascination to. He suggests a use of spiritual senses as an extension to bodily senses, which are insufficient while perceiving even a western work of art as within the sacred realm. Such an imaginative vision which reminds us of lost harmony, values, like love – can be called 'creative' "for there is no world – real or ideal – of which it could be a copy. Unless that is, God exists and there is a paradise we have lost and a paradise to be regained".[175]

[173] Louth 1996, 162.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Louth 1996, 169.

Certain hierarchs likewise are at ease with appreciating and admiring some great masterpieces of western art and see nothing but a positive influence coming out of it. They are aware of the diversity of western art and the possible unsuitability of certain instances, but artistic creativity for them is also considered in anthropological terms as one of those greatest human abilities having a potential of transcending human nature into God-likeness. It is not a coincidence that some other writings on art are often included in various papers and interviews on the subject of ecology rather than liturgical art. While some conservative Orthodox are preoccupied by preserving the tradition through passively passing the experience from generation to generation, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, takes the same line which made Dostoyevsky and his following generation of religious philosophers embrace the world in their vision of the sacred. The Patriarch suggests widening the horizons of ascetic contemplation: "The contemplation of the glory of God hidden in creatures and things, about which our ascetics speak, must move beyond monastic cells and hermitages to inspire the efforts of science and culture".[176] His all-Holiness calls us to regard nature with respect and thus give glory to its creator in the same way as "we treat an artistic creation which reveals the genius of the artist".[177]

Patriarch Bartholomew reveals his awareness about the faults and failures of Renaissance culture as well as its good consequences: emancipation of the various aspects of culture made possible "a rash of amazing developments which would not have been possible had clerical power been maintained. But this also led, either through ignorance or out of refusal… to a spiritual collapse which could ultimately lead to knowledge and power without meaning".[178] However, he believes that "the affirmation of the human element still inseparable from the divine, begins even earlier in the Byzantine world, This resulted, on the one hand, in the first Italian Renaissance, strongly tinged by Franciscan influence, and, on the other, in the masterpieces of iconography at Nerezi, Mistra, and Chora".[179]

While the Orthodox conservatives often confuse the Renaissance epoch with Renaissance art, by simply regarding it as a mere mirror-like reflection of the time. Patriarch Bartholomew is trying to find common elements between eastern and western Christian cultures. He points out that the knowledge of the Greek fathers increased in the west toward

[176] Patriarch Bartholomew, in Clement, 2007, 233.
[177] Clement, 2007, 101.
[178] Clement, 2007, 123.
[179] Clement, 2007, 174. See Illustration №15.

the end of the 13th century, and that the Latins could not possibly escape entirely the Byzantine aesthetic.[180] Mediterranean man "consistent with Byzantine aesthetic, believes that the purpose of *techne* is to reveal the secret beauty of *physis*: for example, by cutting open a block of marble to manifest the lines and colours which lie dormant within it".[181] His vision of the light of the Resurrection is not limited only to the Orthodox, but he sees it, like the Gospel that "introduces an ethic of creative love. In the Holy Spirit, man discovers his vocation as 'created creator".[182] It is precisely the active spirit of creativity that breaks down "the frozen opposition between sacred and profane, between pure and impure, the Spirit substitutes the power of sanctification".[183] Patriarch Bartholomew's positive outlook on creativity allows space for all artists, western and eastern, who manage to transform the fallen nature of visible objects into their ultimate meaning.

Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia wisely points to the resemblance of an artist with the Greatest Artist and suggests that "each man or woman is a creator after the image of God the Creator, a 'sub-creator' in J.R.R Tolkien's phrase".[184] He sees the ultimate calling of every human being to be "the priest of the created order, refashioning material things, revealing God's glory in them, and so giving them a voice and making them articulate in the divine praise".[185] In the specific context of writing on the subject of icons, Metropolitan Kallistos considers iconography as the expression of the Church's doctrine that "bears witness to the royal priesthood that is the prerogative of every human being".[186] The ultimate function of the icon is liturgical. It is part of the liturgy. "Outside of the context of prayer it ceases to be an icon and becomes – what is by no means the same thing – a picture on a religious subject. Within the context of prayer it is not just a 'visual aid' but fulfils a sacramental function, constituting a channel of divine grace".[187] Therefore, making an icon is not merely a technical execution of the dogma of the Church but the task involves a much greater calling. The Orthodox Church blesses every human creative activity by giving a special place to iconography in its theology and worship. To sanctify the icon and incorporate it in the worship of God is to call down the "blessing also upon all other forms

[180] Clement, 2007, 182
[181] Clement, 2007, 212.
[182] Clement, 2007, 230.
[183] Clement, 2007, 230.
[184] Ware 1986, 197.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.

of human art and craftsmanship".[188] The Church, by celebrating icons as part of the liturgy, takes upon itself a priestly duty to sanctify all the arts that reveal the traces of the divine presence in different ways.

Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamos is also eager to see artistic creativity in a broader context. He, like the previously discussed hierarchs also sees artistic creativity as the priestly duty for the creation without restricting it to an iconographer alone. Zizioulas's prposed patristic interpretation of human being as the 'prince of creation' poses him as the microcosm of the whole of creation. He refers to St Maximus the Confessor, who developed this idea suggesting that in the human being we have the whole world present, a sort of microcosm of the whole universe. Because the human being has this organic link with creation and at the same time the drive to unite creation and to be free from the laws of nature, he can act as the 'priest of creation' as a Liturgical being.[189] The writings by the modern clergymen, that we have discussed, reveal a promising tendency in Orthodox thought to see all the aspects of world and life as inseparable from the divine realm. However, creativity more than any other faculty deserves their right treatment as being the greatest human faculty, that unites man with God and allows him to acquire his likeness.

Summary

The literature we have discussed reveals a certain disagreement among the Orthodox thinkers about how to approach western art. The reasonable fear of western influences in artistic presentation of the Eastern Christianity exposed western art as a threat from the 17th century onwards. However, even nowadays the problem remains unresolved. Those Orthodox authors who prefer to remain faithful to the apologetics of iconography against western art often overlook the fact that the threat in the 17th century did not come from western culture but the weakened spirituality of the Church, which had lost its Christian discernment of good and bad. In fact it was precisely the Church of the time that lost its authentic taste for the good and adopted precisely those elements from western art, which are judged negatively by western standards as much as by the Orthodox. Orthodox religious thought on the subject divides into two categories: one tendency starting from the early 20th century that appreciates iconography against an inferior western art, supporting the arguments which were necessary in the time of true and authentic iconography. The other

[188] Ibid.
[189] Zizioulas, 2003.

side that has older roots of ecclesiastical consciousness adopts the truth from western thought without fear. The Orthodox thinkers influenced and indebted to Soloviev's way of thinking tend to consider artistic creativity in more anthropological terms. This view appears to be closer in the authentic Orthodox vision of the broad theological meaning of artistic creativity as a general distinctive feature that distinguishes *anthropos* from other animals and allows him acquire the lost likeness of God. Inspiring the fear of western art might have been seen as necessary at the time when a rediscovery of true iconography was crucial for the Church. However, nowadays when iconography is by no means threatened by western influences it may be time to question the excessive condemnations of western art and consider the condemned elements in the light of patristic thought. It is worth exploring the three points made by the four theologians such as Trubetskoi, Florensky, Ouspensky and Kontoglou. The topics of the following three chapters will be separately dedicated to the positive counterarguments against the vision of western art as guilty of three major 'sins': 1) transferring the gaze from heaven to earth; 2) encouraging individual artistic creativity and 3) inducing the world into the 'plague of aestheticism' inflicted by the seductive beauty of artistic presentation. Each chapter will explore the underlying theological significance of each point and the theological significance of each will be analyzed through patristic sources, joined by the thoughts of the Russian Intellectuals and modern theologians as well as western thinkers and art historians.

Chapter 2

A Christian Evaluation of the General Phenomenon of the Artist

Introduction

In the famous opening line of Gombrich's *Story of Art* he wisely observes that "there really is no such thing as art, there are only artists"[1] who create art. Art as a handmade work is a fruit of the creative pursuit of the human mind and hands. The natural association of the artist creator with God the creator is not alien to either western or eastern Christian thought. Yet, the Orthodox Christian notions of art and artist differ significantly from western perceptions of the same. Modern Orthodox theologians justly give a special place to the maker of icons and liturgical art when considering the religious responsibilities of the artist. However, the conservative Orthodox objections to the western concept of an artist-creator usually derive from the fear of western individualism, as long as the individual artist is proposed as someone who imposes his own limited view upon the world.

This chapter will examine the western concept of the individual artist, the meaning of artistic imagination, intention, inspiration and the inner conflict between the person of the artist with his creative personality from an Orthodox Christian theological perspective employing the views of western psychoanalysts as well as Orthodox Christian thinkers such as Berdyaev, Patriarch Bartholomew, John Zizioulas and others. The present study will attempt to affirm and appreciate the differences between the concepts of the iconographer and of the individual artist instead of setting a hierarchical order between the two, and yet will also demonstrate a respectful consideration towards those specific cultural and historical circumstances in which the opposite views were expressed.

2.1. The Orthodox Christian understanding of the concept of the iconographer

A tendency is observable among the conservative Orthodox believers nowadays to create some folk theology out of the image of an iconographer, regarding him as a mere tool and 'a brush in the hands of God'. This misguided attitude often results in giving iconography the status of a mere skill rather than an art and portrays the iconographer not as an artist cooperating with God but a mere craftsman or artisan. Mango rightly assumes that the myth about the lack of originality of an iconographer owes a great deal to the gap in creativity

[1] Gombrich 2007, 15.

brought about by iconoclasm.[2] After iconoclasm, the efforts were made for restoring what had been lost instead of creating something new. This episode of breakdown unfortunately often seems to fascinate some modern traditionalists who desire to set it as a norm rather than a period of struggling for survival.

The general adoption of art in Orthodox Christian worship recognizes art as an embodiment of divine revelation. Yet the authorship of the work of art has been debated since the Byzantine Empire experienced the iconoclastic controversy. Iconodules, in order to discard the Iconoclasts' objection to the veneration of icons as idolatry, stressed the superhuman origin of iconography and proposed the existence of those icons, which were made 'not by human hands' known as 'αχειροποιητος' as evidence of their divine origin and consent. The famous legend about the icon that appeared to Abgar the king of Edessa took shape in the second half of the 6th c. The story tells that the king sent a painter to Jesus and the painter was unable to draw his likeness because of the light that shone from His face. The Lord, considering the wish of the king, placed a piece of cloth upon his face and his image immediately transferred to it.[3] Through the 'αχειροποιητος' icons Christ's presence, and the power of his Holiness, again became accessible to humans. According to these legends, "Christ had chosen to reveal himself through the image 'not made by human hand', so that men and women might know him, remember him, and above all worship him".[4] The icons not made by hands enjoyed a special reverence: "Its miraculous appearance certified and guaranteed the authenticity of Christ's likeness. The image thus functioned as a reliable document".[5] Yet, not all icons that were used for veneration were 'αχειροποιητος' and this never stopped the iconodules from venerating them as the images of their prototypes.

The supernatural element in the life of an icon also affected greatly the consideration of the role of the icon painter from the Orthodox Christian point of view. If an icon is going to have a life of its own and it is the manifestation of the living presence of its prototype, then the painter can no longer be a master of his own wishes and artistic experiments. He is obliged to submit to the tradition that guides him through the correct theological

[2] Mango 1986, 181.
[3] Mango, 1986, 171, he refers to E. Von Dobschütz. Christusbilder 1899, 102.
[4] Kartsonis, in Safran 1997, 64.
[5] Kartsonis, in Safran, 1997, 64.

descriptions of every particular saint. The stress on divine authorship places an iconographer in a privileged position of participating in a divinely caused activity.

Orthodox Christians treat the very process of making an icon with special reverence, as a sacred process in itself. The icons, made through the cooperation between the artist's wish and God's grace, were already considered as sacred for their presentations and their meanings. The blessing of icons was not a required practice until the 17th century.[6] The second council of Nicea in 787AD had to formulate the origin and function of icons and declared that "the making of icons is not the invention of painters, but the approved legislation of the Catholic Church… The conception and the tradition belong to the Holy fathers of the Church and not the painter; for the painter's domain is limited to his art whereas the disposition manifestly pertains to the Holy Fathers".[7] The statement came as a response to the iconoclastic belief that a human being cannot portray the divine. This brief statement, however, encouraged the artist's creative skills by entrusting to him the artistic domain, while attributing the authorship of the theological concept to the Holy tradition. The Holy Tradition guided by the Holy Spirit is the author of the content of icons including the images of Christ and his saints while the artistic presentation according to Nicaea is solely entrusted to the painter, whose imagination is informed and supported by the Gospel and the teaching of the church.

The Orthodox theological understanding of the sacred is deeply rooted in the concept of the tradition and embraces more than the western Protestant stress on the authority of the Bible. Orthodox tradition combines the Bible with the teaching of the Church as the collection of the teaching of the Apostles, the decrees issued by ecumenical councils, the thoughts of the fathers enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit throughout their prayerful contemplation. Church as *ecclesia* is a community of persons who speak in the spirit of Christian unity remaining faithful to the tradition. The idea of encouraging individual subjectivity has always been met with great reservations in Orthodox Christian consciousness: St John of Damascus fears that "If license is given to anyone who wishes, little by little the whole body of the Church will be broken up".[8] St Maximus taught that "the wrath of God is the suspension of the gifts of grace – a most salutary experience for every self-inflated intellect

[6] Bigham, 2012.
[7] The Seventh Ecumenical Council, Mansi, XIII, 252, quoted by Mango, 1986, 172.
[8] John of Damascus 2003, 110.

that boasts of the blessings bestowed by God as if they were its own achievements".[9] Yet, the 'arrogant intellect abandoned by God"[10] in Maximus' thought did not necessarily imply artists but more likely theologians. The conciliarity of the church, the idea of 'Sobornost' protects the teaching of the Church from a chance of being misguided by the limitation of the mind of a fallen individual.

The concept of the iconographic Tradition consists of the teaching that passed from generation to generation. Confusion between the tradition of the church and the artistic tradition of iconography is the issue constantly reappearing in the writings of Orthodox writers. Some people may even refer to it as a 'Canon of iconography' the meaning of which is not always clear. The canons issued by various Church councils describe the function of icons explaining why certain images are unacceptable, but hardly any Church council ever released any canon or a law about the rules of icon painting *per se*. The number of manuals for iconographers like *Hermeneia* by Dionysius of Fourna give practical instructions and advice to icon painters, but their aim is to assist the painter rather than to confine his imagination. Orthodox scholarship simultaneously insists that the "lack of emphasis on artistic creativity did not however, lower the artistic quality of new forms".[11] Icon painters follow the example of older icons while learning iconography before they master its theological language and can freely embrace the creative process independently. Leonid Ouspensky, like Kontoglou, is rightly convinced that following the tradition is not a mere repetition of the old but aims at a rediscovery of the internal outlook of the tradition and intends to "be guided by the same living inspiration".[12] It is the same origin of inspiration and same theology that matters and not the practice of copying the old for its own sake.

Uncertainty over how an artist is supposed to portray the truth of the Church without limiting the expression to his personal worldview has forced the Orthodox many centuries ago to clarify the boundary between what belongs to the artist and the area that he has to keep intact. The Orthodox nowadays still confirm the same truth once declared by the Nicean council: "these paintings were not the personal meditations of individual artists, but

[9] Maximus the Confessor, (Palmer 1982, 211).
[10] Maximus (Palmer 1982, 213).
[11] Sendler, 1992, 61.
[12] Ouspensky, 1992, 14.

theology written in images".[13] The Orthodox Christian artist is perfectly content with the role of being 'an interpreter' as long as "Icons are not simply the results of artist's personal creativity and imagination"[14] but first of all they are the manifestations of divine truth. The Holy Tradition that is the author of the content of icons is concerned with its theological validity that is revealed through its artistic presentation. Yet, the inescapable, if slight, alterations mark every icon with the unique imprint of the painter.

All the Orthodox would justly agree that the modern iconographer, like a "Byzantine artist has to clean his soul before he paints".[15] It is reasonably accepted that "the successful accomplishment of icon painting depends entirely upon the icon painter's devotion to prayer".[16] Some would even go as far as to claim with confidence that "Only the saints can be icon painters".[17] The Orthodox artists trust their whole selves to the will of God through a special prayer, in which they ask the Divine Master to enlighten and direct their souls, hearts and minds. They ask him to guide their hands so that they might portray worthily and perfectly His image, and the image of His Holy Mother and of all the Saints "for the glory, the joy, and the beautification of Your Holy Church".[18] Practicing *apatheia* (passionlesness) is an ascetic effort, which serves for purifying one's soul and makes it more sensitive and receptive for divine revelation: "Just as the man who wishes to gaze directly at the sun's brilliance is obliged to cleanse the eyes of his body".[19] The personal becomes impersonal by letting the will of God work through the transparent texture of one's purified soul. The same principle may apply to certain cases in secular art, but this is an essential and deliberate point in iconography. Here the iconographer is presented as a person conducting a priestly duty with enormous responsibility for being a conveyer of divine grace where he has to silence his own passions and carnal desires.

The expectation of purity of heart and the absence of the selfish ego in the process of creating was not alien to the Byzantines. A Byzantine clergyman found it unacceptable to revere the images even of Christ in Latin churches since he did not know "in what terms he

[13] Egon Sendler, 1992, 61.
[14] Michel Quenot, 1992, 67.
[15] Andreopoulos, 2006, 23.
[16] Florensky, 1996, 97.
[17] Florensky, 1996, 88.
[18] Quoted by Quenot, 1992,13.
[19] Symeon the New Theologian (Golitzin, 1995,12).

is inscribed (ουκ οιδα πως επιγραφειται)".[20] Byzantine sources even speak of artists having been rebuked mystically for the misuse of their artistic freedom. A story about the artist who 'dared to paint the saviour in the likeness of Zeus' insists that his hand was withered as a chastisement from above before "Gennadius healed him by means of a prayer".[21] The conventional 'likeness of Zeus' was condemned for its fictional nature even though it was a commonly accepted practice among the early Christians to borrow images from the paintings of antiquity. For the Byzantine believer it was the maker's theological correctness and his intention in the process of making that mattered more than what he portrayed.

The estimation of the work of an iconographer in earlier times was likely to be judged according to the artist's intention of accurately describing the holy tradition, rather than to the personal qualities of his lifestyle. The requirement of 'cleaning their souls' before painting indicates, first of all, the Church's acknowledgement for the need for a spiritual, mental and emotional purification, which in its turn implicitly exempts iconographers from being 'sinless' contrary to the later distortion of the concept. The already clean surely requires no cleaning.

The earliest regulation over the iconographer's holy life can be found in the texts of the 'Council of Hundred Chapters' in the 16th century.[22] An alarming aspect of the text consists of the excessive stress on the danger of a moral degradation of an artist that exceeds the fear of the danger of theological fallacy in the work that could easily be introduced by even a highly moral person. The Muscovite Council states: "The painter of icons must be humble, gentle and pious, avoiding immoral conversations and mundane scurrility; he must be neither quarrelsome nor envious of others, neither a drunkard nor a thief; he must practice both spiritual and corporal purity".[23] The Hierarchs at the council of Moscow seem to be extremely confident about God's plans: Unless a person follows this rule and abstains from making something out of his own mind "God will not grant His divine revelation to such a person".[24] The decree was issued by the Russian Church under the reign of Ivan the Terrible at the time when making icons became popular and even fashionable in Russia and the lack of theological education could easily lead artists into error through a possible

[20] Gregory Melissenus, recorded by Sylvester Syropoulos, Vera Historia, 109. Mango, 1986, 254.
[21] Theodores Lector, *Hisoria Ecclesiastica*. I, 15, Mango, 1986, 40.
[22] Also known as *Stoglav* in Slavonic, Kozhanchikova 1971.
[23] Kozhanchikova 1971, ch 43.
[24] Ibid.

visual misrepresentation of theological doctrines. The element of authoritarian attitude here is employed as a way of instructing and guiding the uneducated laity and protecting the Church from error.

However, the requirement of personal holiness also contains a potential for placing iconographers in a dangerous position. According to the ascetic tradition, the person who is cleaning his heart is hardly expected to acknowledge the cleanness or inner purity of his own soul. St Symeon the new theologian suggests that even talking about dispassion requires dispassion.[25] To deny one's self is not a guarantee of necessarily being possessed by divine grace, especially if the artists believe that they attained at such a degree of purity that they already represent 'brushes in the hands of God' and are worthy of divine grace. One may wonder how the co-operation can take place between two persons if one willingly refuses to engage in the process personally.

Good artisanship and knowledge of rules is enough for creating a proper icon, which will still be employed in a liturgical service. However, the higher value of the outstanding masterpieces such as *The Trinity* by Rublev, or the icon of Christ on Mount Sinai[26] are often attributed by Orthodox theologians to the level of prayerful contemplation and the degree of the artist's holy life unlike the concept of artistic talent prevalent in western aesthetics. However, we can only hypothesize about their sanctity relying on the information about their being monks and therefore assuming that they must have lived holy lives. While examining the idea of the artist's selflessness and his personal holiness as a quality mark of his work, one may recall the example of Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible whose personal holiness could easily be questioned in spite of his involvement in Church activities including his service as a choir master. Ivan IV also composed various hymns including words and music. The scholars believe that in spite of his royal affairs, "There was no period when he was not immersed in music".[27] Russian hymnology dedicates a special place to his creations not only because a tsar wrote them but 'they were written with a sense of grandeur and of urgency, with deep religious feeling".[28] One may wonder how did one of the most powerful rulers in the world named as Terrible managed to meet the

[25] Symeon the New Theologian (Golitzin 1995, 12).
[26] Illustration №16.
[27] Payne 2002, 190.
[28] Payne, 2002, 188.

requirements set by the Muscovite Council and eliminate his own ego from his creative work as an excellent church musician.

The iconographer like a priest cannot escape perceiving the world through his unique intellect that integrates his or her particular circumstances within the truth of the Church. Georges Florovsky suggests that "the human tongue does not lose its natural features to become a vehicle of divine revelation".[29] According to the suggestion in the Nicaean decree God employs the human imagination and not a dead brush as a vehicle for his divine revelation. The mindset, eyes and hands of an iconographer are as actively involved in the process of creating as is in the case of an individual artist. His ways of conveying and presenting are destined to be unique and individual but the theological message he conveys is the common truth of the liturgical tradition. He is by no means a passive brush in God's hands, yet he is not instigating or dictating a fictional theme from his own personal fantasy. The grace of God is considered as the chief agent in iconography, yet the significance of the creative engagement of the iconographer can hardly be overlooked and neglected. While highlighting the absence of the iconographer's ego and impersonality one also has to bear in mind that the idea of iconography lies precisely in the fact that they are the fruit of synergetic co-operation between God and man and the visible manifestations of Christ's God-manship.

2.2. The modern Orthodox responses to the western concept of the artist-creator

The method of attributing specific qualities to the iconographer and regarding him as the authentic version of the artist raises questions about the application of the same principles to Western artists or individual artists in general. Once Iconoclasts objected to the icon painters painting the sacred images "according to their own whim"[30] while the modern Orthodox often tend to apply the same accusation of painting the world "according to their own whim" to even the painters of non-religious subjects. For example, Kontoglou regarded the works of modern art as "chimeras of egoism and superficiality".[31] In his point of view the whole concern of art outside of liturgical iconography "is to display the insignificant sensitiveness of this or that artist"[32] since the individual artist, he believes, is

[29] Florovsky 1972, 27.
[30] Mango 1986, 42
[31] Kontoglou 2004, 42.
[32] Kontoglou 2004, 45.

standing outside the community and the tradition and imposes his personal problems and views on a wider audience. Kontoglou observes that the egoism of the individual artist is basically generated from his desire to free himself from the rules and canonical consciousness set by the Tradition. Kontoglou's description of an iconographer is immensely valuable. A good iconographer, he rightly claims, is neither a mechanical copier, nor a freedom-seeking artist desiring his own self-expression, but someone who prays and lives the tradition and creates new works of art in a traditional manner. It is the Tradition that he renders his own creative will to and adopts it as his shelter. Yet, Kontoglou cannot escape the temptation of disgracing western artists almost personally while he points out that the very nature of the self that the iconographer has and expresses differs vastly from the subjective and selfish self of a western artist with his passions and sinful desires. The secular artist, he believes, wants nothing else than to express his own self unlike an iconographer who "works in the Tradition, who serves the holy art 'in the spirit and truth', the Tradition and the canons of this liturgical art are not an obstacle in expressing himself".[33] Kontoglou employs the description of the iconographer as a way of confronting the individual artist while claiming that the iconographer is the artist who "breathes the true air of freedom, emancipated from the passions of display, egoism, and the desire to impose his own personal feelings upon the souls of others as happens in the case of secular art".[34] Yet, he is always securing a place for the true and authentic self-expression in the work of the iconographer, which he believes is not to be discerned on a visual level but only through spiritual eyes. Kontoglou's comparative analysis hardly leaves a space for divine involvement in the creative work of a secular artist whom he presents as solely preoccupied with promoting his own self and carnal desires.

Russian theologians also tend to dismiss the individual initiative in artistic expression as something sinful and unacceptable. Pavel Florensky related the appearance of the linear perspective in art to the emergence of self-centeredness in artistic expression. He objects to the accuracy of naturalistic presentation by pointing out that "when the religious, stable view of the world disintegrated, when the sacred metaphysic of the common awareness of the people was eroded by the individual judgment of the *particular*, isolated person with his

[33] Kontoglou 2004, 60-61.
[34] Kontoglou 2004, 60-61.

individual point of view … the perspective so typical of the isolated awareness appeared".[35] Ouspensky adds that this is what happened in the west in the time of the Renaissance and in Russia in the 17th century.[36] Leonid Ouspensky evaluated the Nicaean teaching in his work claiming that Orthodox liturgical art "does not depend on individual conceptions of artists"[37] placing the authority of the Tradition as the chief agent in making icons. Ouspensky while following the popular path of distinguishing the iconographer from the rest of the artists evaluated rather radical views proposed by St Ignati Brianchaninov.[38] His vision of the individual artist presents him as rivalling with God: "Having refused God the Creator and declaring *himself* creator, man has created for himself other gods more eager for human victims than the pagan gods".[39]

This negative approach continues in the thought of Philip Sherrard. Yet, Sherrard appropriately acknowledges that every artwork carries the colour of its creator's character and it is not possible for a human being to fully eradicate his individual self from his creation. Nonetheless, his main emphasis, like that of many other scholars, falls upon the way of life lived by an artist, as a force which conditions the nature of his art and that makes it either sacred or totally individualistic, subjective and therefore un-Christian. He applies his view to the holy and prayerful life of the iconographer, since the "works of art always follow, or derive from the way of life (or state of consciousness, or quality of being) of those responsible for them".[40] Sherrard is also much convinced that only the artist who lives a moral Christian life is capable of producing a work of sacred art even if the work does not have a liturgical function. Sherrard, like Kontoglou, sets the ideal of *apatheia* as a standard for every true artist and denies the divine source of creative inspiration without this requirement. Sherrard, like Kontoglou, is very radical in his treatment of all Western artists and does not even allow space for divine intervention as long as the Western artist does not perform any deliberate acts of prayer or self-purification. Sherrard generalizes his view of the western artist with categorical negativity: "the deep seated amoralism of the human being, his internal chaos, is now unleashed by the irresistible and seductive power of

[35] Florensky, quoted by Ouspensky, 1992, 489.
[36] Ouspensky 1992, 489.
[37] Ouspensky 1978, 216.
[38] Although, Brianchaninov spoke in the particular context of a westernized icon of St Barbara dated by the 17th century.
[39] Ouspensky 1992, 478.
[40] Sherrard 1990, 33.

the aesthetic impulses of the soul".[41] Sherrard sees the images derived from the artist's imagination as "an ontological perversion, a lack of coincidence between divine archetype and visible form, a dissolution of the bond uniting the divine and the human, the uncreated and the created".[42] Some other writers also evaluate the idea of the hallucinatory imagination of the artists to the extreme, believing that "while Church art is a common experience of monks and ascetics, abstract art represents only the experience of decadents, it is an imitation of the art of the mentally ill".[43]

The objections against western art made by Kontoglou, Sherrard and a few others can be seen as a reaction against the Kantian idea of the artist genius producing the work of merit that grants him an unlimited freedom and places him above the law. The stress on the authorship of the artist in western or secular art certainly can take extreme forms as in the case of *epatage* which sanctions even an indecent artistic manoeuvre as long as it is proposed by an alleged or self-proclaimed genius. The reservation of Orthodox scholars echoes the patristic caution against delusion, which the Greek ascetics called *πλάνη*, the Latins *illusio*, and the Russians *prelest*. Orthodox theology has never encouraged any kind of meditative emotion and imagination that ultimately leads to illusory psychic phenomena including 'the one', which is referred to as 'mysticism' in Western Christianity. The Orthodox spirituality puts its trust in the divine revelation of the Holy Spirit that shapes the Church's tradition. However, the Orthodox often tend to overlook the fact that there is no such thing as 'western' or 'secular' art that unites all art with the same creative principle, mood or intention. The Orthodox artist is guided and protected by the teaching of the church while the secular artist has to seek the truth on his own. The personal search may and may not lead to delusion, just as every created artefact is undeniably 'art' but not every artwork is a masterpiece, regardless of the personal holiness of its creator.

The Orthodox filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky speaks of the self-centredness of the western artist, which, he admits, he cannot escape either. For Tarkovsky "Art is the capacity to create, it's the reflection, the mirror image, of the Creator's gesture".[44] He devoutly believes that the "artists only repeat, only imitate this gesture. Art is one of those precious

[41] Sherrard 1990, 14.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Karelin 1991, 129. Karelin uses the term 'abstract art' as a reference to all Western art including Renaissance.
[44] Tarkovsky 2006, 170,

moments in which we resemble the Creator".[45] Tarkovsky argues that all people inherently carry an artistic seed within themselves. "We should not squander our talent, for we do not have the right to consider it our own property".[46] Tarkovsky refers to the parable of talents by positively acknowledging his talent, that requires multiplying and bringing it back to God, which act is tantamount to praising Him even outside of a liturgical context. Sherrard also asserts that no holiness and nothing sacred can be born without God's divine intervention: "we cannot talk about the sacred without presupposing God, just as we cannot talk about sunlight without presupposing the sun, however, many mirrors it may be reflected [in]".[47] Art as "the mirror image of the Creator's gesture", which the artists only repeat, is indeed one of those precious moments in which humans are free to resemble the Creator. That is why we can never believe in "art which would be independent of the supreme Creator… in art without God".[48] This approach recalls Gregory Palamas' idea that creativity is something that places humans above angels, since the angels can serve God but they cannot create, whereas humans can 'make' arts and sciences.[49] David Jones beautifully summarizes the sacred meaning of human creativity:

> "A man can not only smell roses (some beasts may do that, for lavender is said to be appreciated in the Lion House) but he can and does and ought to pluck roses and he can predicate of roses such and such. He can make a *signum* of roses. He can make attar of roses. He can garland them and make anathemata of them. Which is, presumably, the *kind* of thing he is meant to do. Anyway, there's no one else can do it. Angels can't nor can the beasts. No wonder then that Theology regards the body as a unique good. Without body; without sacrament. Angels only: no sacrament. Beasts only: no sacrament. Man: sacrament at every turn and all levels of the 'profane' and 'sacred', in the trivial and in the profound, no escape from sacrament".[50]

Zizioulas proposes the same view from the Orthodox Christian perspective: "Only the human being can see a tree, for example, and make another tree out of that, a tree which is

[45] Ibid.
[46] Tarkovsky 2006, 148.
[47] Sherrard 1990, 1.
[48] Tarkovsky 2006, 170-171.
[49] Gregory Palamas, Cap. 63, col. 1165 C. Quoted by Kern 1950.
[50] Jones 2009, 166-167.

'his' or 'her' tree, bearing the personal seal of the person who painted it". [51] Thus *Man* is a creative being unlike other animals. Zizioulas also sees *Man* as a link between God and the world through his exceptional being created as the 'image and likeness of God'. He sees this uniqueness in *man's* capacity to achieve the unity of the world and to make a cosmos out of it: "Man has the capacity to unite the world". [52]

Zizioulas, unlike the more conservative theologians, is rather appreciative of the freedom of artistic activity. He recalls Gregory of Nyssa speaking of *autexousion* - the freedom of the human being. The animals do not have a *logos* in the sense of acquiring a universal grasp of reality, nor freedom from the laws of nature; whereas the human being has to some extent both of these things, and that allows him to consider taking up the role of the priest of creation.

The very gift of creative ability poses itself as sacred and allows the man, *anthropos* to pursue his search for divine likeness. Maritain observes that free creativity that only tends to engender transcendental beauty and involves infinity of possible realizations and possible choices implies in the poet a divine quality. Maritain seeks finding the first essentials of poetry in looking "to the First Poet". [53] Goethe implies that the natural desire of form-making contains the element of resembling God who does not need to worry or fear: "As soon as he does not need to worry or to fear, like a demi-god, busy even in his relaxation, he casts around for a material into which he can breathe his spirit". [54] God has the power to give life and grant immortality and this is where the artistic search for God-likeness originates regardless of the consciousness of it. Goethe thanks his genius for enabling him to see and admire the goodness of his creation like God: "which can look down over such a creation and say as God said, 'It is good". [55] Georges Florovsky assumed that "Man is created in the image and likeness of God – this 'analogical' link makes communication possible". [56] Andrew Louth affirms in his study on St John of Damascus that "Creating human kind in his image … [God] created him to make images". [57] It does not mean that every human being has to produce artworks, but every human being is made

[51] Zizioulas 2003.
[52] Zizioulas 2003.
[53] Maritain 1954, 112.
[54] Goethe 1980, 109.
[55] Goethe 1980, 108.
[56] Florovsky 1972, 27.
[57] Louth 2002, 216.

as a creative being in one way or the other. Human beings have inherited the creative capacity from their Creator. That glory, which the artist is looking for is not the earthly glory but the one he achieves in immortality: "Man who preserves God's art in himself and obediently opens himself to its disposing, glorifies the artist and the artist glorifies himself in his work".[58]

2.3. The Byzantine sources on the appreciation of artistic talent

Studying the early Christian and Byzantine sources questions the modern cliché that overlooks the Christian artist's aptitude and merit. The two waves of iconoclasm destroyed an enormous artistic and literary legacy, which, as a result significantly limits our knowledge of the Christian art before iconoclasm. It is also likely that the position of artists during the ascendancy of iconoclasm was unbearable considering the anathema issued by the iconoclastic council.[59] However, since the controversy was condemned by the authentic Orthodox Church, the discussion of the Church's view of artists in Byzantium should surely follow the positive line. The rules of the artist's anonymity and the lack of innovativeness were relaxed to some extent in the second half of the 12th century when the individual artist begins to emerge somewhat from his previous anonymity. Artist's names are recorded in inscriptions, e.g. those of Ephraem and Basil in the church of the Nativity at Bethlehem (1169) or that of Theodore Apseudes in the humble cell of St Neophytos in Cyprus (1183)".[60] The painter Eulalios, who was highly respected at the court of Constantinople for the spiritual sensibility of his artistic dialect, included his own portrait in a New Testament scene.[61] Nicephoros Callistus praised him for permeating the shapes and colours with spiritual sensibility: "It seems either the painter has dipped his brush (*skariphos*) in immateriality to delineate a sprit, or else the spirit remains unobserved in his picture, hiding in colours his incorporeal nature".[62] Nicephorus has no other explanation except one: "This is [a work] of ardent love … and kindles the heart".[63]

The painter's imagination and artistic vision obviously enjoyed a special appreciation and even served as an example of wisdom in the early church. The fathers greatly applauded

[58] Balthasar 1991, 74.
[59] Hiereia 754, quoted at Nicea II, see Tanner 1990.
[60] Mango 1986, 183.
[61] Mango 1986, 229-230.
[62] Nicephorus Callistus, Mango 1986, 231.
[63] Ibid.

artistic imagination as a form of rhetoric. St Cyril of Alexandria employed one artist's excellent compositional choice, for presenting the stories of Abraham in order to encourage the creative thinking of the faithful, if they were to imagine the story in a visual form. He posed a challenging question: how would they present the life of Abraham: "Would he (have shown him) enacting all the aforementioned things simultaneously, or [shown] the same man [acting] severally and differently, i.e., in different manners and in many places?"[64] St Gregory of Nyssa praised the painter of the scene of Abraham sacrificing Isaac, for presenting the scene in such a moving way that he could not pass by it without shedding tears.[65] St Basil used a rhetorical *topos* to call upon the 'splendid painters' to arise and use all their skills and imagination to magnify with their art "the General mutilated appearance (eikon). Adorn with your cunning colours the crowned Athlete whom I have but dimly described ... May I behold the struggle between the hand and the fire, depicted more accurately by you [than I have done]; may I behold the Wrestler, as he is represented more splendidly on your image. Let the demons weep... Let the burnt yet victorious hand be shown to them once again. Let Christ, too, who presides over the contest be depicted on the panel".[66] St Basil himself reveals a great poetic talent while describing the event rhetorically. His calling emphasises the particular responsibilities of the artist and gives him a specific guidance on how to present the story accurately, adorn it with splendour and make the expression powerful and moving. He expects the artist to make the icon descriptive as well as emotionally powerful for which he considers the role of artistic skills and imagination to be crucial. The very fact that the Saint is calling artists to make a visual presentation of the event that happened, signifies the church's appreciation of the use of individual imagination in Christian worship.

Christian art, unlike earlier epochs, imposed less elitism on the reception and appreciation of art and therefore evolved a more democratic nature. Wall paintings depicting the biblical stories were "speaking to all in the language of all" as opposed to the elitist approach of the Roman aristocratic class. Simplicity of the manner of presentation which is often seen by western scholars as primitive, clumsy and amateur only increased the availability of the new art to all the classes and made it all-inclusive. Hauser is partially right when he

[64] Cyril of Alexandria *Epist XVI*, Mango 1986, 34.
[65] Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti*, Mango 1986, 34.
[66] Basil, *Homilia XVII*, In *Barlaam martyrem*, Mango 1986, 37.

considers the Early Christian art in its social context as "destined to suit the taste of the lower classes" and believes that it was "distinguished from the art of the social elite not so much by its tendency as merely by its quality".[67] The pictures of the Catacombs, in particular, must have been almost entirely made by simple artisans and amateurs whose qualifications consisted in their religious zeal rather than in any special talent for art. The Byzantine sources give a few accounts of a devotional attitude according to which, an iconographer is not required to have any artistic skills but his artistic excellence is measured according to his obedience and faithfulness to the Holy Tradition. They tend to see the artistic mastery as a miraculous result of the blessing of the Church rather than the artist's vision and a refined skill. Mango recorded an episode of a monk who was wise in spirit but had no experience of stone carving at all. He begged his master: 'Father, lay your holy hand upon my heart, and I shall begin carving as the Holy Spirit that is in you inspires me.' The servant of God laid his hand upon the monk's breast and said: 'God will make you wise in stone-carving, too.' He then started to carve the capitals of the columns and completed them".[68] The story mentions only the lack of experience of the mentioned craftsman rather than the lack of his still uncultivated talent.

Christians obviously stressed the power of prayer and faithfulness that was a prerequisite to a good artistic creation. The quality of the artwork was estimated according to its ability to aid Christians in their worship and move them to prayer. The interest in the refinement of artistic manner revived after the Edict of Toleration, when liturgical art became officially accepted by the state and the court of aristocratic and educated circles. The Church, now rich and powerful started portraying Jesus and his disciples as majestic and dignified persons, just as if they were distinguished Romans. Imperial governors or influential senators".[69]

The social status of artists were perfectly honourable in both late antiquity and Byzantium. The Christian artist was greatly supported by the socio-historical circumstances of the Eastern Christian Empire especially in the time of Justinian when the building of new, grand buildings with pompous decorations and triumphant images celebrated the grandeur and the glory of the Christian Empire. The strong and mighty Byzantium revered and

[67] Hauser 1999, Vol.1, 112.
[68] Mango 1986, 143.
[69] Hauser 1999, Vol.1, 113.

generously awarded the artist's profession. With the exception of the time of iconoclasm artists were given certain financial privileges. The Theodosian Creed issued in Trent in 374 exempted art teachers from paying taxes. It declared: "teachers of painting (picturae professores), provided they are free-born, shall not be liable to tax-assessment neither on their own heads nor on their wives and children".[70] They had rent-free studios (pergulas) and workshops in public places. Their salary was guaranteed by the decree: "They shall not be obliged by the magistrates to make sacred [i.e., imperial] images or to decorate public buildings without remuneration".[71] The artist who painted the theology of the Church in visual forms and colours was looked after by the Church.

In spite of the political agenda of artistic expression in Byzantium, the Byzantine artist could hardly be forced to create a work of art that would challenge his conscience or contradict his faith and theological values. Serving the glory of the Christian Empire was a prestige rather than a pressure for a Christian artist.

2.4. The social status of the artist in the ancient world

The consideration of the social status of the artist in a Christian society raises the question of the historical overview of the social status of the artist in general throughout history. It is hard to define with confidence the social status of the first human artists in prehistoric times. Whether the aim of their painting was magic or they were merely celebrating the victory over the prey, the artists were 'speaking' out the collective mind making the other members of the community wonder by being able to portray their concerns in a visual form. It is likely that their gifts would have been treated with respect, awe and even with fear and uncertainty as something supernatural. The occasional emergence of the palm prints on cave walls can reveal the artist's instinctive desire to leave a personal signature, which indicates the artist's own amazement at his own creative potentials. In any case the special position of the artist was naturally determined by the peculiarity of his profession, even though it was much later that the notion of the artist became celebrated. The religious awe for the artistic gift must have alleviated later as the artist's skill gradually turned into a technical device that was to be employed rather than admired. It is likely that Christians have borrowed the idea of anonymity from the Egyptian practice. Hauser rightly notes, "the

[70] Cod. Theod. XIII, 4,4. Decree of the Emperors Valentinian, Valens an Gratian to Chilo, Vicar of Africa, issued at Trier in 374, See Mango 1986, 50.
[71] Ibid.

role of art as a subordinate servant was emphasized so strongly and its absorption in practical tasks was so complete that the person of the artist himself disappeared almost entirely behind his work".[72] The idea of signing his artwork was alien to an Egyptian painter who considered his art to be a humble form of serving gods by following the strict canons of artistic execution.

The social function of poetry and the social position of the poet advanced already in the beginning of the Heroic age in Ancient Greece. Hauser claims that the secular and individualistic outlook of the warlike upper class gave poetry a new content and assigned new tasks to the poet: "He now abandons his anonymity and his priestly aloofness and poetry loses its ritual and collective character".[73] Homer's poets "belong to the court society and are treated as equals by the heroes".[74] The Homeric presentation of the social position of poets is not consistent. While one singer accompanies the prince, the other one appears as something between a court singer and a folk singer. There must have been a distinction between the poets according to the qualities of their artistic mastery. Even though the poetical creation in the heroic age had taken on a rather personal form and was the fruit of individual imagination, it still showed a tendency towards embracing the collective consciousness. Epic historical poetry can hardly be attributed to an individual mind but rather it belonged to "whole schools and even, it may be said, to guilds".[75]

Patronage changed the concept of the artist completely in the age of The Tyrants, when the artist is no longer under the order and tutelage of priests and does not receive commissions from them. His patrons became cities, Tyrants and wealthy private individuals. The works which he executes for them "are not expected to have magical or saving power, and even when they serve a sacred purpose, they make no claim whatever to be sacred themselves".[76] The age of The Tyrants introduced a totally new conception of art and liberated it from the service of religion. The art in the age of The Tyrants is no longer a means towards an end, but it becomes an end in itself. Artworks are not functional but are admired for their own sake, "they become purposeless and to some extent autonomous".[77] The earliest signed

[72] Hauser 1999, 1:27.
[73] Hauser 1999, 1:50.
[74] Homer, OD. XXII, 347,8.
[75] Hauser 1999, 1:55.
[76] Hauser 1999, 1:68.
[77] Hauser 1999, 1:69.

works discovered is the vase of 'Aristonothos' date from about 700 BC. The sixth century BC already presents man as "the artist with a markedly individual personality".[78] Besides painting and sculpture there was theatre, exploited by political power, and which kept the concept of art faithful to the old view, "that the poet is a guardian of a higher truth and an educator who leads his people up to a higher plane of humanity".[79] The poet appears as almost in the same position as "the priestly seer of prehistoric times".[80]

Gombrich reports that it was at about 520 and 420 BC when a great awakening took place in art: "Artists had become fully conscious of their power and mastery, and perhaps despised by the snobs, so that an increasing number of people began to be interested in their work for its own sake, and not only for the sake of its religious or political functions".[81] The recorded anecdotes and stories about eccentric painters remind us of the symptoms of the modern exaltation of artists. Schweitzer attributes the origins of the 'discovery of artistic genius' to the influence of Plotinus' Philosophy. Plotinus regards the beautiful as an essential attribute of the divine nature, through the vision of which the artist alone is able to restore the harmony of the world of the senses that was lost and fragmented by parting with God. Hauser relies on Schweitzer's analysis and argues that the artist, "through the spread of such a doctrine; regains the aura of the divinely inspired seer which had surrounded his person in primitive times".[82] He is still looked at as 'God-possessed'; he is inspired and filled with the knowledge of hidden things, as he was in the age of magic. The act of artistic creation retains a reputation of belonging to the mystical realm and separates more and more from the world of ratio. The position of the artist improved further under Alexander the Great, according to the propaganda made on the conqueror's behalf. The great demand for art led to an increased consumption of art. It also raised its economic value and the public appreciation of the artist. The artists began to separate themselves from the ordinary people and to form a group distinct from that of tradesmen.[83]

[78] Hauser 1999, 1:65-66.
[79] Hauser 1999, 1:78.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Gombrich 2007, 99.
[82] Hauser 1999, 1:107.
[83] Hauser 1999, 1:105.

As early as the first century, The Orator of the Roman Empire Dio Chrysostom compared the artist to the Demiourgos, the Creator.[84] Hauser notes that during the Roman Republic and the early Empire, the current estimate of manual work and of the artist's calling was the same as that in Greece of the heroic, aristocratic and democratic periods. The peasant population of agriculturally-minded Rome still saw the artist as a manual labourer and therefore removed from the society of gentlemen. Yet, the view changed again with the Hellenization of Rome, in the Augustinian age, with its conception of the poet as a 'vates' and with its patronage of the arts on a grand scale, both by the court and by private individuals. Hauser reports that even then the estimation of plastic and graphic arts was relatively low in comparison with poetry.[85] Even painting "is only considered respectable as long as it is not practised for gain. Successful painters refuse to take reward for their work, and Plutarch claims that Polygnotus, for example, was not ungentlemanly (banausos), because he decorated a public building with frescoes without asking for any reward".[86]

At the same time Seneca still maintained the old classical distinction between the artist and his work: 'We offer prayers and sacrifices before the statues of the gods, but we despise the sculptors who make them".[87] Plutarch also said something similar: "No generous youth, when contemplating the Zeus of Olympia or the Hera of Argos, will desire to become a Phidias or a Polycletus".[88] He believes that even though we enjoy their work, their personal worth is not identical with the value of that work. Yet Lucian, on the contrary, asserts that in the statues of the gods we reverence their creators.[89] This variety of views about the artist's worth indicates the degree of perplexity that Roman society experienced over the concept of the artist-creator. The artwork is admired but the artist presents a puzzle as much as he did in primitive times. Together with appreciation, depreciation also continues throughout history and never really disappears "showing that the ancient world, even in its latest period, still clung to the primitive valuation of 'conspicuous leisure' and, in spite of

[84] Hauser 1999, 1:95.
[85] Hauser 1999, 1:107.
[86] Hauser 1999, 1:107.
[87] Lactantius: Div. Inst., II, 2, 14.
[88] Plutarch, Pericles, 2,1. Hauser 1999, 1:107
[89] Lucian, Hauser 1999, 1:108.

its aesthetic culture, was incapable of forming anything like the Renaissance and modern conception of genius".[90]

2.5. The social status of the Renaissance artist

It is commonly accepted that the departure from the concept of the artist as a voice of tradition started in Renaissance Italy when individual artists stood out of the crowd, started signing their works and tried even experimenting with artistic tricks for achieving a true resemblance to visual reality. It is certainly in the time of the Renaissance when artists became famous for their individual art, thus reviving the tradition of classical Greco-Roman antiquity, where the artist was famous for mastery over form and expression.

It was not an accident that the idea of an artist-creator as an independent entity was born in Renaissance Italy, where society and the church equally fell under the spell of secularization. The history of the inquisition does not demonstrate a Christian spirit either. Historians locate the beginning of the Italian Renaissance in Florence in the 14th century[91] and the term refers to the re-birth or a revival of the cultural values of classical antiquity that started with the rediscovery, translation and study of Ancient Greek philosophers. Various theories focused the origins and the principles of Renaissance art on a variety of factors including the social and civic peculiarities of Florence at the time, its political structure, the patronage of the Medici (the wealthy dominant family), and the migration of Greek scholars and texts to Italy following the Conquest of Constantinople at the hands of Ottoman Turks. The fashion for rediscovering classical antiquity invaded the religious consciousness as well. Ficino himself used to reread the scriptures through the eyes of Plato and Plato through the eyes of the Gospel. The birth of Humanism as a cultural movement that accompanied the birth of The Renaissance involved the revival of Latin and vernacular literatures based on classical sources and was mainly associated with paganism. Yet it can be argued that Humanism can be seen not as much a cause of secularization of the European society of the time as it could be a reaction against the corruption and hypocrisy that the mighty upper class instilled upon their country and church.

Burke states that factually speaking the secularization of Renaissance Art meant nothing more than that the paintings with secular subjects rose from 5 per cent in the 1420s to about

[90] Hauser 1999, 1:108.

[91] Even though the signs of modelling the three dimensional figures and perspective emerged much earlier and developed gradually.

20 per cent in the 1530s.[92] Yet secularization of the culture took place under the cover of Christian apparel. It should be mentioned that there was nothing revolutionary or new proposed by Renaissance art. The seeds of all the artistic elements that flourished in the period were adopted from classical antiquity, chiefly from Roman painting. The Renaissance aimed at rediscovering the legacy of antiquity and applying it to the Christian content. Berdyaev considers the Renaissance's attempt of the marriage between Christian and pagan cultures as "the most sublime, significant and tragic failure ever experienced by European man".[93] Yet the artistic bond that the Renaissance artist employed was not quite the same as the one utilized by early Christians. Instead of Christianizing and enlightening matter and human form, the Renaissance artist seeks human meaning in a religious subject. A little earlier St Francis of Assisi believed that religion could be employed on a human and individual basis, which at the time, represented a very radical shift in thought. Petrarch's writings, along with those of St Francis and other emerging scholars, crept into the collective consciousness of the "common man." As art is created by thinking persons, these new ways of thinking naturally began to be reflected in works of art. A new artist was given a new task: that of speaking on behalf of all, on the basis of personal observation and an individual approach. The development of linear perspective and the desire for naturalism in painting came hand in hand with the scientific interest in the observation of nature and natural forces. The humanist movement aimed at demonstrating the benefit gained from learning from the classical, pre-Christian world and encouraged secular subjects such as political science and rhetoric.

It should be mentioned that the image of a Renaissance artist standing above society and dictating his own views to the world, is greatly overstated in the thoughts of modern orthodox theologians such as Kontoglou[94] and so is the myth of their independence. It is true that art in Italy was certainly extremely fashionable as Durer wrote from Venice: "Here I am a gentleman, at home a sponger".[95] Poets and writers dedicated praises to artists; Giorgio Vasari wrote their biographies in the style of 'vitae'. Yet, the individual artists of Italy have never been as free as they may appear to be. Renaissance artists were usually employed by rich commissioners who selected the religious themes according to the

[92] Burke 1987, 44.
[93] Berdyaev, 1950, 211.
[94] Kontoglou 2004, 60-61.
[95] Durer quoted by Burke 1987, 86.

fashion and social standards set by the elite. Therefore it was in fact upper class society that practiced absolute freedom and not an individual artist. Artists usually worked as groups under one master, who was distinguished by the excellence of his artistic skills. The system of collaboration naturally prevented the deliberate individualisation of style. Sometimes the head of the workshop or a supervisor who was signing the artwork might not necessarily be the one who produced the work but could be the one who took a responsibility for the artistic quality's standing up to the standards of the shop.

The revival of individual expression came with the twofold attitude to artists in Renaissance Italy just as it did in earlier times. The famous sculptors of classical antiquity as much as Renaissance artists were creating works of high value and gained popularity, yet on the other hand not everyone in Italy respected artists. The high society of Italy remembered well that Aristotle excluded craftsmen from citizenship because their work was 'mechanical' and Plutarch had suggested that "no man of good family would want to become a Phidias".[96] Burke lists three social prejudices against artists for which reason they might be considered ignoble in Renaissance times: "because their work involved manual labour; because it involved retail trade; and because they were uneducated".[97] They also appeared untidy, with their clothes covered in art materials. Leonardo protested against the ill-treatment of artists: "If you call it mechanical because it is by manual work that the hands represent what the imagination creates your writers are setting down with the pen by manual work what originates in the mind".[98] Cenini similarly claimed that since poet and artist both use their imagination for creating their works, artists also deserve a high status. Renaissance artists saw themselves as not mechanical manual workers or artisans but inspired artists who only embodied manually the poetic idea born in their imagination. It is also likely that Aristotle might have referred by the term 'mechanical' to the soulless job of a technician and not to a creative explosion of muses, which became characteristic of the art of the Renaissance.

While the class division caused the change of the nature and content of art, the taste for the intellectual and for the refined also inevitably caused an enhancement of the class division in Florentine society. A split between the elite and the lower classes was not a new

[96] Burke 1987, 89.
[97] Burke 1987, 88.
[98] Leonardo, quoted by Burke 1987, 89.

phenomenon, though the new fashion for new artistic solutions somehow pushed the division further. The unlearned were not even likely to see secular paintings, which were designed for private houses. Since the paintings were no longer mere illustrations of 'The Book' and required a certain level of intelligence, as well as the fact that they were costly, meant they would unlikely be possessed or appreciated by the unlearned public.

Italian artists had various types of commissioners or patrons: laymen, who enjoyed boasting by having religious themes painted in their own chapels or their houses; there were corporate or individual public or private commissioners including clergy,[99] and other members of the mighty society. The most significant one was the state, which usually carried out humanistic ideals through commissioning works depicting the glory and victory of the nation, expressed through the quest for perfect humanity.[100]

The commissioners were also divided in two groups: temporary clients and permanent patrons.[101] The permanent patrons provided for artists more financial security and comfortable life. Running a shop was offering less economic security and a lower social status but it also gave more freedom than life in the court. The permanent patrons often had three motivations for patronizing: prestige, power and pleasure. Distinguished artists remained in poverty, but those who preferred to please their commissioners gained wealth and a high status in society. Yet some like Masaccio and Donatello were not interested in money. They manifested a deliberate rejection of the calculating and bourgeois values of their modern Florentine society. Vasari described Pontormo's rejection of good commissions while he did other jobs for miserable prices. Those artists[102] who were given a high status under the patronage of various people together with lodgings, had to even gain permission from their patrons to travel or to accept commissions from others. There was no freedom included in the contract.

Giving a high status to the artist was a cheap way for a patron to reward the service, while it meant a lot to the painters in both positive and negative ways. Even those painters who

[99] Though Burke does not list the Church among the commissioners.
[100] See Michelangelo's David, Illustration № 17.
[101] Detailed study of the patronage of Italian Renaissance art see in Burke 1987, 80-118.
[102] Such as Titian, Mantegna, Gentile Belini, Crivelli, Sodoma, Dello, Giulio Romano, Giovanni da Udine Sebastiano del Piombo, Signiorelli, Perugino, bassano, Piero Dela Francesca,Giovani Da Udine etc...

were rich[103] could not feel comfortable with their position for having to limit the freedom of their imagination out of material need. Nobles would be ashamed to work for money, while painters had to sell their paintings, giving them the same status as the grocers and merchants. Under the pressure of the patron's wishes, the artist's position was even harder while he had to please the commissioner and yet remain faithful to his artistic instinct. It was the patron more than the artist who determined the spirit of the culture. The artist's rebellion could only be expressed in artistic terms through finding new visual forms and individual style for expressing the message that could not be said directly. In fact, Renaissance artists faced not so much a need to reflect but more to react against the decay of spiritual values that took place within both the church and society.

The State of the church, somewhat weakened spiritually, gave impetus to secularization. Gombrich suggests that "the ambition of the great bishop's sees to have mighty cathedrals of their own was the first indication of an awakening civic pride in the towns".[104] The worldly nature of the practice of inquisition and the corrupt reputation of Papal authority exceeded the pastoral priorities of the church. The line between the sacred and profane in Renaissance Italy seemed to be somewhat blended. Secularization of society meant that the sacred could be seen in the profane and the other way round. Lay patrons as much as clergy did not make a sharp distinction between the two areas, and continued the profanation of the sacred and sanctification of the profane. Secularization of the sacred space caused the religious sensibility to move into a profane territory. Art, instead of becoming a victim of secularization, in fact, saw a chance of becoming a voice that could preach the Christian faith within the frames of an imposed materialism. Artistic interest in the material world could easily be mistaken as a reflection of the common spirit of the time, yet, it could also be a reaction against materialism as a way of proposing how to see beyond the visual world. The look in the eyes of Perugino's *Portrait of a Young Man*[105] obviously conveyed much deeper religious feeling than his painting of *Christ on the Sarcophagus*[106] which fails to materialize the religious experience in the way that Orthodox icons do. In fact, naturalism in art clashed with a religious subject but it also opened a way of taking the

[103] Pisanello inherited wealth, Tura, Zenale, Perugino, Mantegna, catena, Raphael, and titian became rich by their art.
[104] Gombrich 2007, 207.
[105] Illustration №18.
[106] Illustration №19.

religious sensibility outside the religious story and express it in a place where it would be least expected. Gombrich rightly pointed out that "the new devices and discoveries of art were never an end in themselves"[107] to the great masters of the Renaissance. They used them to bring the meaning of their subject "nearer to our minds"[108] and to increase the power of expression.

Renaissance painting inherited religious themes as its main subjects from the middle ages. Yet the religious themes gradually became more and more formal and even superficial since Renaissance artist discovered the way of discerning the transcendental within the frames of the natural world. Leonardo Da Vinci's endless observations throughout the natural world present the scientific element involved in artistic imagination.[109] The interest in natural sciences was largely brought about by Humanism, which was adopted and applauded by painters. It has been suggested that art from a social perspective could obtain a greater social recognition, it could liberate itself from the crafts by establishing a theoretical and scientific foundation. Subsequently, the artists could rise from the condition of artisans and approach the level of the upper middle class.[110]

Another factor that may have contributed to preserving and nourishing the Renaissance artist's religious consciousness under the cover of secularism was the invasion of Florence by The Black Death, which hit Europe between 1348- 1350 and changed the worldview of people in 14th century Italy. Italy was particularly affected by the plague, and some scholars suggest that the resulting familiarity with and devastation by death caused thinkers to appreciate life on Earth more fully, rather than focusing on spirituality and the afterlife.[111] It has also been argued that The Black Death instigated a different kind of piety. The interesting point is that the fear of death inspired wealthy aristocrats to care about art and become patrons and connoisseurs of religious works of art. It was no longer religion that employed art, but the religious consciousness found a different way of artistic expression. Change of patronage conditioned the change of the character and the spirit of painting.

[107] Gombrich 2007, 229.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Illustration №20.
[110] Antal 1947, 376.
[111] Kleiner 2013, 406.

Thus, artistic interest turned towards seeing the imprints of God the Creator within the material world, rather than submitting to the hypocritical religious excitement of contemporary Florentine society. The only option for the artist to express the sacred truth within the worldly limits set by the patron was to search for it outside the church and outside the social standards, while still formally remaining within the frames of both. The superficial character of a religious subject, imposed by the patron, can hardly undervalue the elevating nature of great masterpieces. They even appear as essentially religious even if the religious story was completely removed. The Renaissance taught western artists to communicate their religious sensibility through the power of emotional and intellectual expression. The Renaissance certainly marks the beginning of secularization in art, but it also enabled humanity to discover the potentials of human creativity in its mission to search for truth under the pressure of godlessness and hypocrisy. In fact, a western artist does not have the luxury of support from a sacred tradition, and finds himself all alone in his struggle for being unconventional and honest. His only support is his gift of ceaseless searching. Feeling betrayed by the Church forced the western artist to move his religious sensibility outside the liturgical boundaries and seek God outside the Church. Considering the Renaissance artist's pressure, one can conclude that in their lonely struggles for truth "the great artists of the Renaissance are in their lives Christian sufferers, sacrificed and crucified for their art".[112]

2.6. Artist in the modern world

The phenomenon of the Court Artist carried on after The Renaissance throughout the Baroque and Rococo periods. Art became a means for glorifying oneself in the hands of the upper classes and all influential people, including the higher clergy or the lesser nobility who wanted their likenesses and deeds recorded by painters and sculptors. The court artist inspired the political notion that the powers of the state are virtually unlimited.

The social status of the artist started changing to a greater degree in the Age of Enlightenment. Rococo Art with its excessive luxuriousness inspired a repulsive reaction in the lower classes while the philosophy of the enlightenment was preparing the world of art for a more rational quest for antiquity, thereby giving birth to Neoclassicism. The artist's struggle for independence became particularly acute in the 18th century and it even obtained

[112] Rank 1923, 291.

a political character, merging with a revolutionary spirit for independence. The order for rationalizing nature and the content of painting increased the hidden hostility between the commissioner and his artist. The political flavour of artistic expression addressed the class division and hypocrisy of the upper classes' lifestyles, while the poor were neglected and abused.

The tyranny of state patronage manifested in opening the *Salon de Paris* (started in 1674 but especially prominent in 1748-1890), where dull and soulless paintings were expected to aim at a selective presentation of beauty executed with highly skilled academic excellence. Exhibition at the salon marked a royal favour. Both French Academy and Salon were greatly possessed by the bureaucratic spirit that failed to recognize the genuine rationale and aim of art that would respond to the issues that concerned modern times. Denis Diderot and Charles Baudelaire later were among the writers who were provoked by the existence of the Salon to write about the authentic meaning of art and the artist. Honoré Daumier later politicised the snobbery of the middle classes, enjoying the Salon paintings as a source of pleasure and entertainment and repeatedly addressed the subject in his caricature paintings.[113]

Diderot blamed the tyranny of patronage throughout the history of art for crippling the artist's creative imagination. For Diderot, "the artist's inner freedom is the impulsive unaccountable flow of the pencil and brush, of images and ideas; verve, enthusiasm, spontaneity, and naturalness are its outward signs. Without that flow there is no authentic art".[114] Meyer Schapiro criticized Diderot much later, yet, he believes that Diderot's condemnation would be just had he not mistakenly generalized the problem and attributed it to the whole of art history, while the problem Schapiro claims, was particularly problematic in France in the age of Enlightenment. Schapiro is right in arguing that "It was in the course of a long process of social development, during which the aristocracy and church lost their authority and the middle class assumed the leading role that the artists' work became increasingly secular and intimate in the choice of themes and freer and more open to everyday experience in the forms".[115] In the 18th century not only patrons but the character of society determined the state of the artist and art in general. The idea of a freely

[113] Illustration №21.
[114] Schapiro in Waldauer 1964, 5.
[115] Schapiro 1998, 203.

created art, of artists speaking up the truth and being responsible to themselves alone, like the concept of intellectual freedom, was an outcome of the social situation. The struggle started "between the artists and the high-placed or journalistic dictators of fashion and opinion in art".[116] Schapiro points to the 18th century as the time when art officially became the field of individual self-expression. The urge for artistic independence coincided with the emergence of an independent art critic who was free to condemn or applaud a work of art and whose voice had power and weight in public. The artists often asserted their personal views against the ideas of patronizing amateurs, critics, and officials of the schools. They displayed in their writings the independence of thought and the bold polemical style of the most advanced minds in their milieu".[117] The debates over the meaning of art and artist increased the gap between the artist and the society by placing the artist in the centre of public interest and attention and even outside the ordinary members of society.

Gombrich refers to the 19th century as a time when the status of an artist changed dramatically when "artists began to see themselves as a race apart".[118] They even tried to look different from the rest of the people. If the artist was forced to please the taste of the patron for want of money, "he felt he was making 'concessions', and lost his self-respect and the esteem of others.[119] On the other hand, if he decided to follow only his inner voice, and rejected commissions that confronted his conscience, he was in danger of starvation. Gombrich reports that in the nineteenth century a deep division emerged between those artists "whose temperament or convictions allowed them to follow conventions and to satisfy the public's demand, and those who gloried in their self-chosen isolation".[120] The Industrial Revolution and the decline of craftsmanship changed the rationale of art and complicated the position of the artist, as did the rise of a new middle class, and the production of "cheap and shoddy goods which masqueraded as 'ART', had brought about a deterioration of public taste".[121] The recognition and awareness of self-worth among the artists who refused to compromise developed into the tendency of being isolated from other artisans who focused their attention on what 'sells' rather than what they think is right and

[116] Schapiro 1998, 204.
[117] Schapiro 1998, 204.
[118] Gombrich 2007, 502.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.

honest to express. Their status in society was far from being applauded as long as they refused to satisfy the public demand. The artist who "sold his soul and pandered to the taste of those who lacked taste, was lost".[122] So was the artist who dramatized his situation, who admired himself as a genius for no other reason than that he found no buyers. Yet there still was a difficult way of remaining true to one's own conscience regardless of public opinion. Gombrich noted that for the first time, perhaps, it became true that "art was a perfect means of expressing individuality – provided the artist had an individuality to express".[123] All the artist was left to do while opposing the widespread hypocrisy that was taking over social values, was to focus on his inner sincerity and to seek related souls who would be united with the same urge. The division emerged even among the art appreciators. The snobbish fashion for the accepted and applauded was laughed at and opposed by those who could look and see things beyond society's prejudices. The new generation of art lovers "wanted art to bring them into contact with men with whom it would be worth while to converse: men whose work gave evidence of an incorruptible sincerity, artists who were not content with borrowed effects and who could not make a single stroke of the brush without asking themselves".[124]

Therefore it was only in the nineteenth century when the sense of honesty in art started rebelling against the clichés establishes by the materialistically minded society. A real gulf opened between successful artists - the ones who contributed to 'official art', and "the nonconformists, who were mainly appreciated after their death".[125] Artists' struggles against being exploited for political purposes started as early as the Renaissance. Yet, it reached its climax in the 19th century, when art was forced to applaud the corruption of the bourgeoisie. The split between the artist's conscience and society's double standards became inevitable. It was in fact the hypocrisy of the elite that it was high time to expose as 'ridiculous'.

The mutual distrust between artists and the public rose on the grounds of morality and conventionalism. While the people saw the artist's appearance as dirty, odd and ridiculous "Among the artists… it became an acknowledged pastime to 'shock the bourgeois' out of

[122] Gombrich 2007, 502
[123] Ibid.
[124] Gombrich 2007, 503.
[125] Ibid.

his complacency and to leave him bewildered and bemused".[126] The split between public and artist that started in The Renaissance when the individual artist stood out of the crowd, increased in the age of enlightenment and took an extreme form in the 19th century. The tendency towards politicizing the artistic message became inescapable. Courbet's manifesto was obviously inspired by the political ambition of being a pioneer and a prophet and a forerunner of the future. He opposed the insincerity of the upper classes and made painting available for all, especially for the poor and the suffering. The all-inclusive revolutionary spirit also increased the theological significance of art *per se*. Art was no longer a luxury, but started communicating with people, exposing the sinful and fallen principles of modern society and stood as an indicator of something more important beyond human misery and hardship.

In the struggle for telling the truth every artist had to find his own individual way of speaking up, which required a unique artistic form and a manner of expression. Orthodox writers often condemn that version of artistic originality, which encouraged individualism and separated an artist from the rest of the community. It is true that originality in Italy enjoyed a greater freedom than it did in the East as long as it served the interests of the patron. The sanctioning of originality allowed the artist to find indirect ways of passing the limits of the patron's interest and express a greater message without directly opposing the patron. Yet, when the patronizing attitude was revealed on the part of the whole secularized society, the artist was eager to apply the same response.

The fact remains that originality itself, even in the West, is neither a virtue nor a vice. It is unavoidable and yet it has never been a deliberate prerequisite for making an artwork. Originality is the artist's primary property, it is natural and no artistic personality can possibly escape it. The quest for originality for its own sake, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon and it emerged much later than The Renaissance. It was born in the era of modernism when *épatage*[127] became almost the central value in Western European art and it aimed at astonishing or shocking the world and thus attracting public attention. This phenomenon tends to politicize art to its extreme and easily pushes towards 'art for art's sake'. Initially *épatage* served a positive purpose attempting to wake up society from its

[126] Gombrich 2007, 501.
[127] Initially derived from the French phrase *épater le bourgeois* that meant to shock the bourgeois and became an inspiring slogan of the French poets and artists of the 19th century including Baudelaire and Rimbaud.

indifference, immorality, hypocrisy and conventionalism. Even the degree of shock varied from the epoch to epoch. The shock that the public once experienced by seeing the Manet's *Olympia*[128] and *Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe*[129] at the Salon followed by the new findings of impressionists, later looked innocent and conventional compared to Marcel Duchamp's porcelain *Fountain* exhibited at the Society of Independent Artists in New York in 1917.[130] Duchamp's practical joke made a provocative statement exposing society's snobbishness and hypocrisy by bringing into the exhibition hall an awkward puzzle implying that art has turned into an entrepreneurial mass-production in its lowest sense feeding the tasteless arrogance of a snobbish society.[131] Yet, the fascination with the scandalous in art later encouraged an independent movement in artistic expression that inspired to accentuate the power of shock that art can generate. Increased interest in 'art for art's sake' in its turn brought an ironic approach to avant-garde and produced numerous self-proclaimed geniuses. The shocking and provocative inventions presented at exhibition halls have gone as far as displaying plain canvases[132] and even an artist's own excrement claiming to "tap mythological sources and to realize authentic and universal values".[133] This shock therapy played an enormous part in the history of the 19th and even 20th centuries. However, the shocking experience that provokes a great sensation for the first time becomes boring and turns into a kitschy cliché when repeated. Finding the shocking experience for a 21st century society has been challenged by the accelerated rhythm of life in the era of modern technology. Therefore the search for the shocking often results in labelling modern art with a reputation of 'ridiculous' since the desire to surprise the world jeopardised the artist's poetic freedom and authentic uniqueness. Formerly a prophetic voice that exposed the faults and hypocrisy of social standards has turned in our modern times into a scandalizing figure often labelled as either 'mentally disturbed' or a 'narcissist asking for attention'. The rationale of modern installations and conceptual statements in art galleries gradually put art back into an elitist setting by becoming accessible to only the professional art critics or the intellectuals educated in art history. A modern artist still has to work for a wealthy connoisseur who is advised and guided by influential art dealers. Because of the deliberate

[128] Illustration №22.
[129] Illustration №23.
[130] Illustration №24.
[131] The evolution of a public response to the phenomenon of *épatage* will be discussed in chapter 4.
[132] Rauschenberg created a series of 'white paintings' in 1951.
[133] Weintraub *"Piero Manzoni"*, Grove Art Online.

search for originality and strangeness art in the 21st century faces a greater risk of commercialization than ever before.

Either a secular or a religious disposition of society usually preconditions the social status of the artist almost automatically. Priestly seer, a highly skilled artisan or an inspired genius all gained a special place and stood out of the crowd throughout human history. The artist is employable for his special talent and he was always employed by the powerful for proclaiming their glory. The change of the social status of the artist reflects the changes of social standards and its preferences. An artist is a priestly seer as well as an artisan and a genius. In a religious society, the religious feeling of the society responds to his feelings, yet the freedom of his individual expression is not a priority. In fact, the secular society limits the freedom of the artist's individual expression to an even greater degree. Compromises the artists have to make for being paid, applauded and promoted causes them enormous inner struggle. The desire for freedom may exceed the desire for fame but it cannot force the artist escape the fear of starvation. The sense of slavery naturally provokes the sense of protest in the artist against the values that limit his freedom and induce him into a hypocritical lifestyle. Artists more than anyone else suffered at the dehumanizing hands of slavery, which "takes away half of our manhood".[134]

Diderot assumed the way the modern artists wanted to see themselves: "They wish to be free creators, unconfined by any goal external to art: but they wish to participate in the most advanced consciousness of their society and to influence it by their work".[135] Yet, their wish usually remained unfulfilled. Worldly society is too excessively materialistic to simply appreciate the truth told by an artist. However, Schapiro justly attacks Diderot's statement as if the pressure coming from the dictatorship of patronage is the ultimate killer of inspiration. In every period of art history art has been under the patronage of one power or the other but it has not 'choked inspiration, though artists of that [Renaissance] time have left us reports of their uneasiness'.[136] In fact, as Schapiro argues, those times when art was greatly under the power of patronage produced great masterpieces of art and this cannot be overlooked. Schapiro refers to the art of The Far East where the class of independent artists emerged under the despotic regime who painted and wrote poetry for themselves and for

[134] Homer, *Odyssey*, 17, 322.
[135] Schapiro 1998, 207.
[136] Schapiro 1998, 202.

each other, with exacting standards of perfection. The painter Wu Li (1632-1718) says about old artists: "Neither kings nor dukes or nobles could command these painters; they were unattainable by worldly honours".[137]

The struggle for non-conformism showed up in even more dramatic and painful ways in the Soviet Union in the 20th century. The life-long pressure coming from a ruling class of the 19th century hypocritical bourgeois could be just as devastating as the life-threatening oppression by the Soviet government. The quest for truth forced many artists to find indirect yet compelling ways of expressing themselves even under extremely restricting circumstances. Some Soviet artists chose to paint the portraits of Lenin for security reasons while the others allowed smaller compromises as a way of speaking in the form of a parable. Non-conformity and rebelliousness in art gains value only if it is guided by the urge for truth and not for its own sake. In most cases the pressure that the artist experiences from the limits set to his freedom of expression encourages his creative urge to find a more powerful, more expressive and appealing way of communicating his message.

The popular Orthodox reservation about an individual artist as a self absorbed personality dictating his own limited imagination upon the world may be popular in modern Orthodox scholarship but historical examination presents it as somewhat exaggerated. The socio-historical overview confirms that the role of the artist from the beginning of history to the present day indicates the change in society's standards more than that of the artist's. Addressing the audience of a secular society challenges the ways of artistic expression. It is society and not the artist who left the sense of the community circled around eternal values in the spirit of truth. Therefore, the only way for the artist to survive as a prophet is to stand out and walk against the stream that rarely grants him fame and glory in his lifetime.

2.7. Intention and unpredictability in the creative process

The phenomenon of the artist as an arbiter of moral and spiritual values seems to be one of the main targets of Orthodox criticism of Western art during and after the Renaissance. If an artist exhibits his own worldview publicly, it is instantly taken as an attempt at preaching and imposing his own personal standards upon the world. Modern Orthodox references to the Western concept of "the identity of the author as the initiator of art"[138]

[137] Wu Li, quoted by Schapiro 1998, 203.
[138] Andreopoulos 2006, 99.

imply that the artist is fully in charge of his creative work and possibly can even envisage the result of the work. It is in the Renaissance that we first encounter the emergence of the artist as an independent entity who is free to create an artwork according to his wishes. Leonardo Da Vinci believed an artist could bring into existence anything that appeared to his mind.[139] Yet, he also acknowledged that supernatural inspiration allows a work of art to be born from an artist in a mysterious and secret way.[140] Accusations of western artists' worldly intentions require a more thorough examination of the level of consciousness involved in the process of creative work of a secular artist.

In the case of an iconographer, the artist's deliberate intentions are fully obvious while in the case of an individual artist doubts may arise. Some modern Orthodox scholars see a justification for the individual artistic intention by expecting the artist to "employ a different guide in his exploration, and like the iconographers who fasted and prayed before and during their work, he has to connect the materials of his art to the religious archetypes that exist in the unconscious".[141] Yet, unlike science, there is very little in art that makes artists feel obliged to 'have to do' in a certain way and the way it happens in a creative process is never fully pre-planned or preconditioned.

It is a common experience within every creative act, including iconography, that artists usually start their work with a certain intention, yet, the initial plan almost never meets the result. Picasso pointed out that an artist has to have "an idea of what he is doing but it has to be a vague idea".[142] Rank is also correct in noting that "modern individualist type of artist is characterized by a higher degree of consciousness than his earlier prototype".[143] Yet, the very process of creativity leads to the result that one cannot possibly predict.

Schelling wisely observed while getting to know practising artists more closely that he became "acquainted only with their own disagreement and lack of understanding of the matter at hand".[144] This also projects the Kantian idea that: "an author … does not himself know how the ideas for it [his art] have entered into his head, nor has he it in his power to

[139] Leonardo da Vinci 2009, 53.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Andreopoulos 2006, 150.
[142] Picasso 1972, 28.
[143] Rank 1923, 37.
[144] Schelling in Cooper 1995, 176.

invent the like at pleasure".[145] It is true that artists themselves are never constructive interpreters of their own works. They expressed their message through their artistic gift while explaining it is not necessarily part of their gifts. Maritain rightly pointed out that there is a particular intellectual process at the root of the creative act, which has no parallel in logical reason, and "through which Things and the Self are grasped together by means of a kind of experience or knowledge which has no conceptual expression and is expressed only in the artist's work".[146]

The accounts of artists in the process of making sheds light on the unpredictability of the creative process, that springs from their intention, but which later takes a different direction and makes of their initial plan something profounder and more thought provoking. Picasso argues in favour of the power of the creative process that changes an artist's intentions and makes the final work of art unpredictable. In his view, one does not cease to be one's own self while being guided by the spontaneity of the way things change, which can be identified as divine providence. He points out that if one's initial plan is not fulfilled then it means that it was not good: "Have you ever really done what you planned to do? On leaving your house do you not often change your route without thinking about it? Do you cease to be yourself on that account? And do you not get there anyhow? And even if you don't, does it matter? The reason is that you did not have to go".[147] Destiny here implies a revelatory inspiration that an artist cannot willingly control but "it follows the mobility of one's thoughts" in harmony.[148] Andrei Tarkovsky shares Picasso's view that even though going to the film location unprepared makes the work destined to failure, but in the process of making he discovers that life is "much richer than [one's] own imagination".[149] It would oversimplify the subject if the Western concept of authorship, as opposed to the Orthodox idea of an iconographer, solely referred to the subjective intention of the artist and applied to every artist in the same way.

The artist is obviously moved to create before he even decides to; however, his intention is also not to be underestimated. Every artist would say that something mysterious happens during the creative process which is not only the result of their tireless experiments but the

[145] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, I.I.I, XLVI, (Walker 2009, 150-151).
[146] Maritain 1954, 34.
[147] Picasso 1972, 28.
[148] Picasso 1972, 29.
[149] Tarkovsky 2006, 131.

process of their work itself shows them an unexpected direction which they would not envisage in any way. Picasso makes a sharp distinction between his dreams in which he does not see anything out of the ordinary and the work itself that astonishes him by its revelatory nature. He believes that "it is the outcome of work, which makes the greatest contribution to creation. If we never arrive at this astonishment about our work, we never create new forms".[150] Preference for the unintentional often derives from the artist's belief that truth springs out of experience rather than knowledge, for knowledge is subject to the limitations of the fallen human nature: "What counts is what is spontaneous, impulsive. That is the truthful truth. What we impose upon ourselves does not emanate from ourselves".[151] Certainly, not all artists are equally aware of their 'divine ordination' but the fact is that there is always a sense of having some unexplained energy within one's self that gives the power to a creative process. Picasso sincerely acknowledged the mysterious experience of a creative process: "No explanation can be given in words, except that by some liaison between the man-creator and what is highest in the human spirit, something happens which gives this power to the painted reality".[152] Creative intuition seeking the right form in artistic expression guided the individual artist when the self and the desire for glory is set aside, at least temporarily in pursuit of creative excellence.

The way the artist is perfecting the work reminds us the story of Genesis when God created the world and admired it when he saw that it was good.[153] Artistic creation resembles the process of divine creativity. An artist might have intended one thing but in the process of making he can see that something else is good and more beautiful and chooses what is more expressive and more appealing. We cannot say for sure that when God was creating he had or did not have in mind any plan before making but what we know is that the dynamic process of making and perfecting ends in acknowledging its goodness; this implies the unexpectedness of the final result, even though we cannot say with confidence if there is anything outside the knowledge and expectations of God. The factor of foreknowledge appears to be one of the sure differences between God's work and man's in that while

[150] Picasso 1972, 91.
[151] Picasso 1972, 21.
[152] Picasso 1972, 25.
[153] Genesis 1:31.

God's work cannot mean more than what he meant, man's must mean more than he meant.[154]

Dynamism that emerges in the human creative process in fact reveals that the process of creation is neither only a divine activity nor only human. It is also hard to attribute the creative initiation to the human representative only. St John of Damascus suggested that "It is necessary to search out the truth, and the purpose of those who make them [icons]". [155] St John makes it quite clear that the intention of good is not limited to iconography only but it has to be found in the desire for truth and avoidance of evil.

It can be argued with confidence that every true masterpiece was created with the good intention of finding the right form that would appeal to the hearts and minds of all and direct their gaze beyond the misery of the earthly realm. The process of finding the right form for expressing a greater message requires enormous concentration that embraces or even requests a divine intervention.

2.8. A general introduction to the artistic use of human imagination

Even though icons are not fruit of the artist's individual imagination, nevertheless every artistic activity itself owes its performance to the work of the faculty of imagination. The faculty of imagination generates and forms mental images and enables us to perceive the world through our senses. The images produced by imagination have an abstract nature and not a material substance; they exist in the human mind. The fact that there are no two precisely identical copies made even by the same hand verifies the uniqueness of the imagination of every single human mind and the uniqueness of even every single creative act. Orthodox scholarship reveals an immense awareness of the dangers of abusing individual imagination while attributing the authorship of icons to the Holy Tradition and not to the imagination of an individual artist. The danger of the imagination consists precisely in its vulnerability to abuse. The conceptions of both creating a work of beauty or making a weapon of mass-destruction take place in human imagination.

[154] Sherry 2002, 123.
[155] John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, 2:10, (Louth 2003, 67).

Yet the creative use of imagination turns the artistic process into the practice of disclosing the inner being of things.[156] Michelangelo spoke of the process of sculpting as a process of liberating the image from the custody of formlessness, while carving a marble block.[157] Einstein discerned the superiority of the imagination over knowledge for "Knowledge is limited; imagination encircles the world".[158] Knowledge is limited by the possibilities of the factual and material realms, whereas imagination can pass the boundaries of material settings: one can visit any place in the world and do anything one's heart desires through imagination. A documentary record is based on the pragmatic precision of facts while fiction used in an artistic context involves the emotional as well as the intellectual realm.

2.9. Ancient Greek views on imagination

Imagination's attachment to the sensory part of the human soul challenged the Greek Philosophers long before the advent of Christianity. The source of the Christian teaching is Christ and not the thoughts of Greek Philosophers, yet, Christian tradition never rejected the seeds of wisdom and truth that might be found everywhere throughout human history.

Looking for the place of imagination in the human soul and its relation to the intellect were topics of discussions in ancient Greece as well as in patristic writings. Plato is said to be influenced by Parmenides vision of the unchanged world and Heraclitus's warnings of the unreliability of the senses. Xenophanes (570-475 BC) warned about the dangers of what we would call the imagination for its limitation in proposing the image of the ideal world. Plato believed that men live in the world of appearance.[159] The central place in Plato's philosophy has the two worlds, two realities. The world which is always in a state of combination of sensation and belief, and on the other hand there is that which always is to be grasped by intellection and reasoning. The real knowledge or Episteme is possessed only by humans while animals share aesthesis or sense-perception.[160] Phantasia in Plato's thought is represented as a judgment that operates by means of sensation; It is a knowledge that is tentative (Philebus), sometimes false (Republic) and in any case second-rate and

[156] Coleridge was the first Western philosopher to distinguished between *phantasia* as fancy and the disciplined and creative use of imagination, Coleridge 1977.
[S] Parker 2014,112.
[158] Einstein 1996, 223.
[159] Plato, *The Republic*, book 2.
[160] Plato, *Timaeus* 27d–28ai, 52a,

inferior (Timaeus), but it is by no means simply to be dismissed.[161] Phantasia in Timaeus introduces the possibility of transcending ordinary knowledge through inspiration. Watson believes that Plato's theory leads us to the idea of imagination, "with which we stretch beyond the sensually verifiable, and reach or create a world which we feel should exist, and which satisfies a longing which seems to us reasonable".[162] Phantasia for the Greek philosophers is the secondary access to the divine reality which takes place via a combination of sensation and opinion and which is possessed by the majority of people, including artists.

One of Aristotle's criticisms of Plato is applied to his view of *phantasia*.[163] Aristotle refuses to consider *phantasia* in terms of sensation or judgment. According to him *phantasia* has derived even its name from light (*phaos*) because without light one cannot see.[164] *Phantasia* is an element in the process by which the mind builds judgments; it is not itself a judgment. It might be true that "Aristotle's patient building of a bridge from sense to intellect by way of imagination was ultimately to prove very important for Christian theology".[165]

The other view of *phantasia* found in antiquity is revealed in a document by Sextus Empiricus who reports that according to the Stoics "man does not differ from irrational animals by speech taken simply as uttered (*prophorikos logos*) for crows and parrots and jays produce articulate sounds, but by the reasoned speech which is internal (*endiathetos logos*); nor is man distinguished by simple phantasia alone (for the animals too have such phantasia), but through the phantasia of transition and composition (*metabatike kai synthetike*)".[166] The stoic concept of creative imagination that raises the human being above other creatures agrees more or less with the authentic Christian view of creative imagination.

2.10. The ascetic Christian approach to Phantasia

The Platonic concept of the unreliability of the senses had an immense impact on the Christian attitude to fantasy (as the Greek *phantasia* is usually rendered in English) in

[161] Watson 1988, 33.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 3.3 428a16–18.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Mackey 1986, 35.
[166] Sixtus, *Advanced Mathematics*, viii 275-6.

ascetic literature. It is easy to find references to imagination or fantasy in an ascetic context in which it is styled as a demonic force, as a distraction from prayer and divine contemplation. Here imagination is often associated with impure fantasies, day dreams and an escape from reality into the world of illusions. The desert ascetics warned their disciples to stay in their cells mentally as well as physically and they believed if a monk is physically in his cell but is mentally involved in worldly affairs, he had already left his cell in his mind and betrayed his inner stillness and prayerful contemplation.[167] Evagrios Ponticus is warning monks by calling them to guard their minds against the power of fantasies: "thoughts which darken his mind will inevitably arise from the part of his soul that is the seat of passion".[168] Watchfulness is the essential part of every ascetic practice in the invisible warfare with demonic powers. A sin committed in the imagination counts as a sin but a virtue imagined by imagination never makes anyone holier or a better person unless it is put into practice. Jesus Himself makes it clear that: "everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart". [169] Virtue is only obtained through action while *phantasia* can easily defile one's soul and push one into a sin by bringing the misleading images or sinful fantasies to mind. Considering all this, a monk has to discern and beware of the distracting, misleading and deceptive potentials of the imagination.

Likewise, modern Orthodox writers' uneasiness about the subject of creative imagination is not entirely unreasonable since: "Between body and spirit there is the soul of man. The soul is our intellect, our emotions, all the forms of awareness that exist in us. This is the danger-spot in our lives, because this is the point of impact of all temptations. The devil cannot tempt our flesh".[170] The cautious attitude to the imagination's openness to temptations is not a prejudice against the body and matter but it bewares the pleasure-seeking inclination of the senses, which can lead a Christian astray from the Creator. Body and senses are inclined to seek illusionary and immediate pleasure and therefore can easily be manipulated by demonic manoeuvres. Inducement of a monk into a delusional state is the ultimate danger of the type of fantasy from which the ascetics are trying to protect their disciples. In that particular context fantasy has a great potential to be used as a weapon in the hands of

[167] Ward 1984, xxv.
[168] Evagrius 1972, 35.
[169] Matt. 5:28.
[170] Bloom 1996.

the devil and therefore a monk has to guard himself from its misleading and destructive powers. Yet, the creative use of fantasy and imagination differs greatly from the context of ascetic practice.

2.11. A positive Patristic outlook on imagination

Nevertheless, the imagination certainly affords many opportunities for employment in good works. For example, it can be promoted in pastoral care as a tool for cultivating compassion, empathy and sharing even if it gives a mere reflection of the real experience.

According to the Church fathers, imagination, apart from generating distracting images can also be helpful during prayer. St John of Damascus describes a method of prayer practiced by St John Chrysostom. According to him, when St John had finished the epistles of St Paul he would gaze at the icon of the Apostle and "attend to him as if he were alive and bless him, and bring the whole of his thoughts to him, imagining that he was speaking with him in his contemplation".[171] Here 'imagining' has more of a connotation of focus and concentration, which are essential in prayer. It indicates his conviction that the Apostle is truly present and attending his prayer. St John here refers to the imagination as a way of bringing himself into the contact with the saint that exceeds the limits of mere remembrance. St John Chrysostom himself seems to be particularly open to the use of the imagination as directing his full attention to the heavenly realm. He does not hesitate to tell us: "open then even now in imagination thine eyes, and look on that assembly, composed not of men such as we are, but of those who are of more value than gold and precious stones, and the beams of the sun, and all visible radiance, and not consisting of men only but of beings of much more dignity than men,--angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers".[172] He is therefore not suggesting picturing the visual appearances but he allows the use of imagination in considering the magnificence of the heavenly assembly.

The essential feature of the more positive patristic view of imagination, is the acknowledgment of its role in creativity. It would nevertheless oversimplify the issue to assume that the condemnation of the imagination in ascetic writings solely refers to the inferiority of human imagination. The imagination is attached to the bodily senses and

[171] John of Damascus I.61, (Louth 2003, 55).
[172] John Chrysostom, *Selected Homilies*, 1,11 (Stephens 2012).

therefore is more easily subjugated to the body than to the soul. Christianity does not reject the body but looks at it in the context of the wholeness of the human being. The negative ascetic view of the imagination by no means implies a rejection or condemnation of the senses but the fathers see the intellect – nous – as the guide of the senses. Even though modern psychology finds it hard to detect its exact location in the brain cells, the fathers of the Church demonstrated a remarkable knowledge about the subject well before modern scientists reached similar conclusions. St John of Damascus locates the imagination "in the front part of the brain and thus conveyed to the faculty of discernment and stored in the memory".[173] St Gregory Palamas, in spite of his attribution of the imagination to natural knowledge, also describes it as a "faculty of the soul, which in turn appropriates these sense impressions from the senses, completely separate from the senses themselves",[174] forms the bodies and their forms and stores them like treasures for recalling them later "even when a body is absent".[175] Here Palamas exempts imagination from the senses and sees it more as a manager of senses. Palamas' definition also raises the link between memory and imagination. The imagination has almost a life-giving power in the way the memory operates. The memorized objects do not come back themselves but the images of them make their idea present. The images or sensations, which have a corporeal and transitory nature become part of history, but only through the use of the imagination do they live in memory and therefore gain eternal value.

The defence of icons during the iconoclastic controversy elucidated the theological function of the human imagination not only in an artistic context but also in relation to the Incarnation as God's respect and care for human nature. St John of Damascus is particularly honest about the human need for analogies: "which are formed in shapes in accordance with our nature, and longed for".[176] His vision of the proper use of imagination is to "use our senses to produce an image of the Incarnate God Himself" [177] by which we "sanctify the first of the senses (sight being the first of the senses), just as by words hearing is sanctified".[178] He considers the image as a way of contemplation: "What the book does

[173] St John of Damascus 1.11 (Louth 2003, 26). Nemesius also mentioned earlier that "The organs of imagination are the frontal cavities of the brain", Nemesius 2008, 101.
[174] Gregory Palamas, Col. 1132, ch. 16 (Sinkewicz 1988, 99).
[175] Ibid.
[176] John of Damascus, 1.11 (Louth 2003, 26).
[177] John of Damascus, 1.17 (Louth 2003, 31).
[178] Ibid.

for those who understand letters, the image does for the illiterate; the word appeals to hearing, the image appeals to sight; it conveys understanding".[179] The context of his argument suggests "not that images are books for the illiterate, but rather that images appeal to the highest of the human senses, that of sight".[180] St John lists *phantasia* among the five senses of the soul: intellect, reason, opinion, *phantasia* and sense-perception.[181] St Theodore of Studios also writes in his letter to Naukratios that the soul possesses five faculties: *phantasia*, *aisthetis*, *doxa*, *dianoia*, *nous*; the last four depend upon *phantasia* and with this argument he defends the making of icons.[182] He points out that "If the image were unprofitable, then the imagination which depends on it and coexists with it would be even more useless, and if it is useless, then so too would be the faculties that coexist with it – the senses, opinion, understanding, the intellect".[183] By securing the place of the imagination among the faculties of the soul the Church fathers affirm its natural positive meaning as intended by the Creator. For Synesius (370-412) imagination establishes bonds between the world here below and the divine world, it is like a mirror of the soul in which one sees his own self and enters into a conversation with the gods.[184]

St Symeon the New Theologian declares that the true knowledge of God does not come through letters and formal study but through contemplation, "which comes to pass only through the Spirit in those who are worthy, and is the same as the thoughts produced by their own reasoning".[185] He is explaining 'being worthy' as someone who is purified and illumined by longing for truth, "whose eyes have been clearly opened by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, whose word of knowledge and word of wisdom is through the Spirit alone".[186]

St. Gregory Palamas defines the imagination as a faculty of the soul through which we obtain natural knowledge. He believes that our perception gathers all information in general from the senses and the imagination through the mind "and no such knowledge could ever

[179] Ibid.
[180] Louth 2002, 202.
[181] John of Damascus, (Palmer 1982, 334).
[182] Theodore of Studios, PG, XCIV, col.1220b et seq.
[183] Theodore of Studios, ep.380, lines 167-73.
[184] Synesius, *On Dreams*, (Myer 1988, 6-7).
[185] Symeon the New Theologian, (Golitzin 1995, 113).
[186] Symeon the New Theologian, (Golitzin 1995, 114).

be called spiritual but rather natural, which does not attain the things of the Spirit".[187] According to St Maximus the Confessor there are two types of knowledge, one is natural knowledge that we obtain through senses and everyone possesses it. The other is limited to those only who are illumined by the divine light: "Unillumined persons may posses natural knowledge but not supernatural, while the illumined person may posses both or he may even attain supernatural knowledge without natural".[188] The imagination can turn towards good purposes when it is illumined by the intellect with the divine light. St Maximus describes the intellect as illumined and purified when it desires the unity with God through all of its senses.[189] Purified imagination perceives the presence of God in every creature and every object. The transformation of the sensible world by the intellect occurs through the spiritual senses which recognize a common element in the inner essences of things that radiate God's divine energy. Imagination in this context clearly has the task of recalling and recognizing not only the forms and appearances of objects but it has to recall the divine element in a human soul that unites man with the rest of the creation. Its goal deprives the imagination of the opportunity for subjection to carnal desires and self-will and turns it into a spiritual contemplation with openness to divine wisdom and revelation. St Maximus is cautious and aware of the dangers of the imagination but instead of warning of guarding one's own self from it he suggests to focus on the only true path which leads "intelligent beings towards the source of intelligence, the Logos Himself. God rejoices in intelligence alone and this is what He demands from us His servants".[190]

The patristic thought on human imagination places Man as *anthropos* between heaven and earth: he can either sanctify God's creation by directing the imagination to heaven or waste his imagination in idle day-dreaming. The only way for us to touch the untouchable and to see the invisible lies in our imagination that is not to create a fancy image of the divine and invisible reality, but as St Maximus suggests, it means grasping the divine energy in the inner essence of things.[191] In Maximus's thought the sinful inclination of the body derives not from the distracting power of the imagination but from the imagination's inability to discern the inner essence of things beyond their outward appearance. Maximus argues that

[187] Palamas 1988, Col. 1132, ch.20 (Sinkewicz 1988, 103).
[188] Maximus, (Palmer 1982, 40).
[189] Maximus (Palmer 1982, 258).
[190] Maximus, (Palmer 1982, 298).
[191] Ibid.

"An intellect, which, fed by the senses, dwells in imagination on the visible aspects of sensible things becomes the creator of impure passions"[192] since it is unable to advance through contemplation to the similar intelligible realities. When the intellect is illumined and enjoys its authentic state, it "brings forth words of wisdom; a pure soul cultivates godlike thoughts".[193]

St Maximus's view of imagination as a sense perception seems to be closer to the stoics' view that creative imagination places human person above the animals. Evagrios and St Maximus both agree that the imagination, which is limited to sense perception only and is not illumined together with the intellect, makes our mind stare at objects of corporeal reality and prevents us from looking beyond them. Evagrios was using the word phantasia to indicate the receptivity of sinful thoughts but his meaning of 'understanding' and contemplation seems to be closer to St Maximus's definition of the authentic meaning of imagination that perceives God's divinity beyond the worldly experience. Maximus specifies imagination as part of the soul, which can be transformed, illumined and is supposed to participate in the process of perceiving the divine realm beyond the visible boundaries. The Greek Philosophers who strictly question the reliability of senses tend to limit their possibilities of illumination, transformation and redirection from the transitory animal state to the eternal and deified realm. Whereas, the Christian perspective that affirms that "God is not the author of evil"[194] examines the undistorted nature of the faculty of imagination which cannot be evil or limited when used for its authentic purpose.

2.12. Theology of artistic inspiration

Even in the case of the western artist, all art lovers would agree that the artist's desire is never enough for producing a great masterpiece if there is no inspiration from above. The word *inspiratio* means 'breathed upon'. Its origin takes us back to Hellenism as well as to Hebrew culture. The pressurizing element of prophetic inspiration is acknowledged in the Old Testament: The Biblical Amos was overwhelmed by God's voice and felt forced to speak.[195] In the case of Jonah there is even a dramatic reference to the conflict between the individual will and the force of divine inspiration. Jonah did not want to go and preach but

[192] Maximus, (Palmer 1982, 203).
[193] Maximus, (Palmer 1982, 323).
[194] St Basil, quoted by Walsh 1985, 23.
[195] Amos 7:14-15.

he ought to and even had to. Nevertheless, Prophetic mission is neither God's violation of human will nor can it be seen as the result of an individual will and enthusiasm. It rather manifests the Orthodox idea of synergetic cooperation between human and divine wills.

In Exodus, where Moses is being instructed about the building of the Tabernacle and all the accompanying artistic works, two people are called: Bezalel and Aholiab. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works. . . . And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan".[196] Dan is the tribe which judges, as an umpire: "Dan shall judge his people",[197] therefore the artist even as a technician inherits the ability to judge or discern by the spirit with which he is 'filled'. As a matter of fact, the making of the tabernacle was to be carried out by the only two people in the Old Testament who were referred to as 'filled with the Spirit': "Bezalel, in the shadow of God, in the context of praise, and his helper Aholiab, who is a supporter, sustainer, a type of the Holy Spirit, the Discerner".[198]

The revelation of the Holy Spirit as being breathed upon reached its peak at the Pentecost where the Apostles were given the gift of speaking different languages as a tool for bringing the light of Christ to the world. Orthodox icons portray the descending spirit figuratively as the tongues of fire on top of the Apostles' heads. The divine fire that emerges occasionally in both Old and New Testaments is the illustration of the grace of the Holy Spirit that gives life and light.

The image of the uncreated fire of divine inspiration stands closer to the Greek concept of supernatural inspiration. According to the Greeks, inspiration came from the muses and the gods Apollo and Dionysus. Plato, even though he condemned certain artists that inspired indecency and immorality, admitted the supernatural power of the creative impulse as a 'divine madness'[199] commonly known as ecstasy. Socrates poetically states that divine power moves the rhapsode "as a 'magnetic' stone moves iron rings".[200] Plato has no doubt that beautiful poems are not produced by humans, but by gods, while humans are only

[196] Exodus 31:1,6.
[197] Genesis 49:16
[198] Bryant 2004, 8.
[199] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 6:243e-246a.
[200] Plato, *Ion*, 533.b.

representatives of gods: "they are inspired, possessed, and that is how they utter those beautiful poems".[201] According to Plato a poet must be either inspired by gods, or if he claims to be performing through his own self, then he must be lying (doing wrong).[202] At this point the Orthodox would tend to question whether it is possible to distinguish between being 'inspired by gods' and 'doing wrong' and how right it is for the poet himself to be convinced about the heavenly origin of his own inspiration.

The Greek word ecstasy *Ek-stasis* literally means being outside of one's own self, which implies to being possessed by an exterior power. The discussion on the inspiration and especially outside the boundaries of the Orthodox Church certainly involves the discussion on divine grace and human will. Vladimir Lossky states that the Western term for the 'supernatural' signifies for the East "the uncreated – the divine energies ineffably distinct from the essence of God".[203] According to the Augustinian teaching for Roman Catholics, Grace is a created intermediary between God and man. The eastern understanding of the synergetic operation between will and grace places the emphasis on their unity "in which grace bears ever more and more fruit, and is appropriated – 'acquired' by the human person. Grace is a presence of God within us which demands constant effort on our part".[204] The grace of God according to the Orthodox teaching is omnipresent as is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also known as "the creative Agent, and the Perfector or Sanctifier of all things... the Originator of all things is One: He creates through the Son and perfects through the Spirit".[205] Salvation involves man's freedom of giving his consent to the Will of God and his synergetic cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

While the modern Orthodox scholars tend to limit the revelation of the truth to the strictly liturgical boundaries of the church, the patristic vision of truth tends to embrace the whole of the humankind. Athanasius the Great saw the inspiring work of Christ in the lives of all: "The saviour is working mightily among men, every day He is invisibly persuading numbers of people all over the world, both within and beyond the Greek-speaking world, to accept His faith and be obedient to His teaching".[206] St John Cassian equally pointed to God's will for the salvation of all that offers divine grace to everyone: "The Grace of Christ

[201] Plato, *Ion*, 533b.
[202] Plato, *Ion*, 542a.
[203] Lossky 1991, 88.
[204] Lossky 1991, 198.
[205] Basil 1980, Ch 16.
[206] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, (Behr 2012, 61).

then is at hand every day, which, while it "willeth all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth", calleth all without any exception, saying: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you".[207] St Seraphim of Sarov even specifies the possibility of divine grace among the pagans: "The presence of the Spirit of God also acted in the pagans who did not know the true God, because even among them God found for Himself chosen people… Though the pagan philosophers also wandered in the darkness of ignorance of God, yet they sought the truth which is beloved by God, and on account of this God-pleasing seeking, they could partake of the Spirit of God, for it is said that the nations who do not know God practice by nature the demands of the law and do what is pleasing to God [Rom. 2:14]".[208] According to St Seraphim seeking the truth is 'God-pleasant' seeking even if the person is not conscious of the divine goal of his seeking. This view recalls the Gospel image of the true light "who enlightens and sanctifies every man that cometh into the world".[209] St John Chrysostom makes it clear that God enlightens the world by the fact that the world lies in Him. However, he also points out that those who deliberately close their eyes "would not receive the rays of that Light, their darkness arises not from the nature of the Light, but from their own wickedness, who wilfully deprive themselves of the gift".[210] Yet the wilful denial of the gift and deliberate closing of eyes already indicates a very clear and deliberate act rather than a mistake caused by a chance.

St Theophan the recluse teaches that the divine grace in order to awaken man's spirit and lead it to divine contemplation either "*directly* acts upon it, and in carrying out its power, gives the opportunity to break the bonds that hold it, or *indirectly* acts on it, shaking the layers and meshes off of it and thereby giving it the freedom to assume its rightful position".[211] The all-embracing divine grace "directly inspires the spirit of man, impressing thought and feelings upon it that turn it away from all finite things and toward another better, albeit invisible and mysterious world".[212] Therefore, inspiration by the Holy Spirit can be detected in a person's ability to see the greater reality of infinity beyond the visual appearance of things. St Silouan sees God the Father as the origin of inspiration for every

[207] John Cassian, *The Conferences*,(Ramsey 1997, 425).
[208] Seraphim of Sarov 1999, 12-13.
[209] John 1:9.
[210] John Chrysostom (Schaff 1979, 29).
[211] Theophan the Recluse (Rose 1997, 109-110).
[212] Ibid.

good impulse: "entering the creative act itself is the communion with the life eternal that is sought by humans".[213]

The patristic thought on the universally abiding divine grace portrays the image of the good God who wishes the salvation of all. The fathers are aware of the riches of God's grace and that it cannot be limited to holy baptism, but they hold that in baptism that grace is concentrated to its purest state. Even Evagrios, in spite of his ascetic rigour, believes that not all thoughts are inspired by demons and suggests the way of discerning between the angelic and demonic inspirations: "A peaceful state follows the first kind of thoughts; turbulence of mind attends the second type".[214] It can also be argued that it can also lead one into despair if one fails to believe in God as the merciful and loving father awaiting the prodigal son at the doorsteps of His house. The promise of the Spirit-comforter was given to the whole creation where the riches of divine grace generously overflow as 'grace upon grace'[215] and is not limited to Orthodox Christians only for as Christ says: "whoever is not against us is for us".[216]

Both Eastern and Western Christianity point to either a divine or demonic origin of inspiration apart from the artistic will when they consider the origin of thoughts invading one's imagination.The origin of melancholy from the inherent accusation of demonism shifted to the possibility of divine infusion. The famous allegorical engraving by Albrecht Dürer entitled ***Melencolia I***[217] describes the concept of melancholy as a state of waiting for inspiration to strike, rather than a depressive affliction. The light on the background also implies the hope for anticipated light from above.[218] The sense of hope is also crucial in the thought of Otto Rank who saw "the individual will to art as a personal urge to immortality".[219] According to Rank an artist can put his fear to a productive use and give it a life-oriented direction through creativity, while a neurotic is incapable of directing his gaze towards the life impulse and instead suppresses his imagination by his inability to cultivate it. Rank's views present the origin of inspiration as something coming out of one's own psyche in the hope of attaining the divine realm. This picture assimilates more with the

[213] Sakharov, 2003, 33.
[214] Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos*, (Bamberger *1972*, 36).
[215] John 1:16.
[216] Mark 9:40.
[217] Illustration №25.
[218] Discussion on the western debates over the melancholy genius see in appendix 2.1.
[219] Rank 1923, xxvi.

Orthodox conception of inspiration as a gift of the Holy Spirit working through the synergetic cooperation between human and divine wills that leads towards deification.

The idea that the artist places himself in the centre of his universe appears to be slightly inaccurate. Rather, he places himself in the middle of a universe in the midst of pain, sorrow and affliction brought on by evil. According to Soloviev the *Sobornost* of a creative act consists not in the fact that all the artists create the same thing in the same way, but rather the way in which every artist draws from himself something unique, that cannot be done by others, something individual, that creates harmonic unity with others.[220] A truly great artist's work becomes a personification of the conscience of the world and unites all through the common truth. The truth we are discussing is in fact what Tarkovsky saw in considering the meaning of life that in his view was also the equivalent to spirituality: "An artist who is not preoccupied with the meaning of life, is not an artist".[221] He is not preoccupied with his own life but the meaning of life in general in the light of eternity.

The famous Jungian concept of the collective unconscious indicates "a certain psychic disposition shaped by the forces of heredity; from it consciousness has developed".[222] There are common things which we all share on an unconscious level. It is usually called common sense (*sensus communus)*. For Kant common sense means the condition of necessity combined with the judgement of taste.[223] Common sense refers to axiomatic truth accepted by everyone. It usually manifests in perception, behaviour, values and morality. It is the place where we share a common truth, it is the faculty that makes human community possible. Leonardo Da Vinci's drawing of Senso Commune[224] demonstrates the artist's vision of its central place in human nature which he even locates in the very centre of human scull at the mid-point of the cranium from top to bottom and a third of the way from front to back. Leonardo depicts it as the very central point in human brain where all the sensory nerves converge. He perceived it as the interface between the world and the mind, the centre, the core of being that all humans share.

[220] Soloviev 1966-1970, Vol 9, 305.
[221] Tarkovsky 2006, 145.
[222] Jung 1933, 168.
[223] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Ch.15, 4th Moment, §20.
[224] Illustration №26.

The idea of an artwork is usually born out of something essential missing from society's consciousness. Kandinsky said that "the artist is a king not only … because he has great power, but also because he has great duties".[225] Tarkovsky admitted that his art cannot exist without people: "Time creates us [artists] as do the people amidst whom we live. And if we succeed with something, it is only because others are in need of what we have produced".[226] It does not follow that the artist is a perfect person and therefore he is supposed to correct the vices of others, but he is also a 'wounded healer' who partakes of the limitations of fallen human nature. Here an artist appears as a poetic philosopher who raises the question rather than offers a solution to the problem. The open question includes him as well as the others. The artist does not mean to influence people but he "constitutes the voice of the people and expresses their inner spiritual state by means of language, thereby conveying the feelings, thoughts, and hopes of the people who in an aesthetic sense are silent".[227] Inward honesty and artistic sensitivity make the artist more perceptive and more receptive toward the truth. One can identify three important aspects of human nature from a Christian perspective: 'heart' is considered as the core of our being; *nous* is the faculty that links us with the greater reality of God; unconscious is an unexplored self, which in spite of being unexplored emerges in the way we interact with the world. All these three can be united in conscience that according to St Abba Dorotheos is the only voice of God implanted by him in every human being.[228] Sin enters human life when people bury their conscience under the dominion of ego's selfish desires.

To be an artist means to expose one's inner self to others, rather than to impose it upon them. "The creative self is both revealing itself and sacrificing itself, because it is given; it is drawn out of itself in that sort of ecstasy which is creation, it dies to itself in order to live in the work".[229] An artist expresses in his painting the truth, which he experienced in his conscience, in the innermost and deeply sensitive part of his soul. He is offering it for sharing, and that leaves him vulnerable to misjudgment, criticism and even rejection.

Conscience, in contrast with selfishness, is something that enables us to share our inner self with God and humankind. It tells us what is right and wrong. It can be said that an artistic

[225] Kandinsky 1977, 54-55.
[226] Tarkovsky 2006, 125.
[227] Tarkovsky 2006, 147.
[228] Dorotheos of Gaza 1977, 104-108.
[229] Maritain 1954, 143-144.

expression is the expression of the artist's conscience. Tarkovsky saw art as a form of prayer for which he was ordained: "The *raison d'etre* of art is prayer, it is my prayer. If this prayer, if my films, can bring people to God, so much the better. My life would then take on its sense, the essential sense of serving. But I would never impose it. To serve does not mean to conquer".[230] An artist's prayer is shared freely, respecting the conscience of others yet trying to wake up their conscience from inward immobility. In fact the artist's conscience touches and speaks to the conscience of observers. It does not force or impose anything, it only awakens the inner voice of God in himself and in those trying to share his experience.

2.13. Discussions about the personal expression of the artist: The problem of subjectivity versus collective consciousness

Kontoglou singles out the art of icons as "the most perfect and the most apocalyptic"[231] since they do not project the artist's personality. Even though Kontoglou formally denounces the practice of mechanically copying icons, he almost romantically looks back to the Byzantine anonymity of the artist, where the identity of an author was least important, since all he was doing was to convey the experience of the past.[232] Icons in Byzantium were not signed until the end of the 12th century.[233] Gervase Matthew argues that "The normal anonymity of the Byzantine artist is due to his social obscurity; the signed icons of the 16th and 17th centuries are the effect of the new status accorded to the painter in the Venetian sphere in Greece".[234] Until then the Greek concepts of art as *techne* and artist as a technician (as oppose to an engineer) were still prevalent. The rationale of the artist's anonymity as part of the tradition is that the iconographer is supposed to let people venerate the true God while the appearance of his name on the artwork could easily distract the minds of the faithful from worship. Iconographers are expected to purge their own sentiments and emotions from their work in order to "avoid imposing them on others, thus furnishing an obstacle to prayer".[235]

[230] Tarkovsky 2006, 170-171.
[231] Kontoglou 2004, 78.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Cormack 2000, 211.
[234] Mathew 1964, 25.
[235] Quenot 1992, 72.

Likewise, western aesthetics also claims "the greater the master, the more completely his person vanishes behind his work"[236] yet being impersonal in the West renders more complexity than a mere anonymity. Maritain observed that the "unconscious pressure of the artist's individuality upon the very object he was concerned with in Nature came to exercise and manifest itself freely in his work".[237] The personal imprint of the artist is crucial and unavoidable in a creative work. Every great masterpiece contains a great balance between personal and impersonal communication. T.S. Eliot pointed to the importance of managing the conscious and unconscious elements in artistic presentation: "A bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him personal".[238] It is impossible for a human person to be totally impersonal in any activity, including the creative act. Gombrich points out that expressing one's personality in artistic creation is not a matter of deliberate choice but artists do it only incidentally, just as much as we all express ourselves in everything we do – "whether we light a pipe or run after a bus. The idea that the true purpose of art was to express personality could only gain ground when art had lost every other purpose".[239]

Besides the popular genre of self-portrait, the practice of acknowledging one's presence in art has always been a temptation for western artists. The artists often employ the reflection of a mirror as a trick that will involve their images in their own paintings. Velazquez acknowledged his presence in *Las Meninas*[240] by bringing himself into the picture. Jan van Eyck used a similar trick in his *Arnolfini Portrait*[241] allegedly included the reflection of the artist among the two people.[242] Yet to regard some artists' penchant for self-inclusion as the expression of their ego or a desire for glory and popularity would oversimplify the subject.

Being personal in art is not something that can make an artist boast. It has been rightly noted earlier that "The intimate is the pollution in art and vulgarity speaks always in the

[236] Heidegger 1969, 44.
[237] Maritain 1954, 23.
[238] Eliot 1950, 58.
[239] Gombrich 2007, 503.
[240] Illustration №27.
[241] Illustration №28.
[242] In Panofsky's view the artist included two witnesses as a Roman-Catholic requirement for making a wedding legal and confirmed the document by his own signature. See Panofsky in Kleinbauer 1989, 196-197.

first person".[243] Orthodox scholars like Florensky, Kontoglou Sherrard and others claim that tradition is safeguarding the painter, yet, they often fail to see the element of collective consciousness in the case of the artistic experience outside the liturgical sphere while portraying the artist as completely isolated and selfish. The collective consciousness of individual artistic creation is particularly prevalent in oriental art including Christian Art and that of the Far East. Maritain admits "in the midst of collective objectivity there is always an individual self of an oriental artist, which in spite of his own intention reveals to us and 'strikes us in the dark'".[244]

Maritain considers subjectivity as essential to poetry. He reminds us that human being is *homo faber* and *homo poeta* together.[245] Maritain speaks of "subjectivity in its deepest ontological sense, that is, the substantial totality of the human person, a universe unto herself, through its own immanent acts, and which, at the centre of all the subjects that it knows as objects, grasps only itself as subject … grasping his own subjectivity in order to create".[246] Maritain singles out the poet from other men involved in the business of civilized life and sees him as someone whose soul remains "more available to itself, and keeps a reserve of spirituality which is not absorbed by its activity toward the outside and by the toil of its powers".[247] The sense of poetry is the essential element that distinguishes art from a skill and craft. T.S. Eliot affirms that "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things".[248] Emotion is part of human nature and fits perfectly within the frames of 'normality', yet the obsessive attachment to it can jeopardize creative freedom.

Maritain argues that subjectivity in poetic intuition is the very vehicle to penetrate into the objective world. What the painter looks for in visible things must possess "the same kind of inner depth and inexhaustible reserves for possible revelation as his own Self".[249] Maritain refers to emotion in poetic knowledge as a carrier of the reality suffered by the soul. He

[243] Lionel de Fonseka, see Maritain 1954, 35.
[244] Maritain 1954, 18.
[245] Maritain 1954, 45.
[246] Maritain 1954,113.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Eliot 1950, 58.
[249] Maritain 1954, 130.

describes emotion as "a world in a grain of sand - into the depth of subjectivity, and of the spiritual unconscious of the intellect".[250] On the other hand the "essential disinterestedness of the poetic act means that egoism is the natural enemy of poetic activity".[251]

2.14. Understanding the distinction between the two Selves of the artist: personal and creative

The unconventional character of an artist often springs from the artist's conviction that social conventions and the "respectable" image of the wealthy middle class are fake and corrupt. Revolutionary artists tend to be political radicals while Bohemian artists often appear as social radicals often expressing their protest through their unconventional lifestyles. The behavioural form of their protest as much as the artistic one usually requires an explanation. Kandinsky identifies the soul's vibration with the content of the work of art: "The inner element, created by the soul's vibration, is the content of the work of art. Without inner content, no work of art can exist"[252]. The inner element that an artist attempts to express appears to be in conflict with the person he escapes. The conflict allows us to question which self the artist is expressing in his art and which one so deeply alarms some conservative Orthodox.

Giorgio Vasari is usually identified as responsible for promoting interest in the private lives of artists in the West. The biographies of artists up to today often expose the details of their lives, which may easily shock even the most controversial of personalities. Yet, even the most inquisitive public usually finds itself surprisingly unable to devalue the great masterpieces of art on the grounds of the psychological, emotional or moral volatility of their creators. Truly, "there is nothing more dangerous than justice in the hands of judges and a paintbrush in the hands of a painter".[253] Yet, hardly anyone would be demoralized by listening to Tchaikovsky's 1st Piano Concerto and hardly anyone may be disturbed mentally by contemplating Van Gogh's sunflowers.

Isaiah Berlin points to the stress on the artist's personal life as an uniquely Russian phenomenon as opposed to the French attitude: the French appreciation of art applauds the artist's achievement and the quality of art disregarding the artist's personal life. It is as

[250] Maritain 1954, 122.
[251] Maritain 1954,144.
[252] Henry 2009, 23.
[253] Picasso 1972, 7.

simple as this: "if you order a table you are not interested in whether the carpenter has a good motive of making it or not" and how he lives.[254] On the other hand, this attitude is rejected by almost every major Russian writer of the nineteenth century. The Russian attitude is that 'man is one and cannot be divided; that it is not true that a man is a citizen on the one hand and, quite independently of this, a money-maker on the other, and that these functions can be kept in separate compartments; … Man is indivisible'.[255] Berlin is right in suggesting that "every Russian writer was made conscious that he was on a public stage… the smallest lapse on his part, a lie, a deception an act of self- indulgence, lack of zeal for the truth, was a heinous crime".[256] For an artist, moral failure was less forgivable than any other failure since speaking out in public, for a writer or a poet or an artist, was considered as acceptance of "responsibility for guiding and leading the people".[257] A creator in Russian thought appeared as a guide and a preacher, who is expected to exemplify the way to fulfil the ideals that he is preaching. Berlin assumes that one "can think of no Russian writer who would have tried to slip out with the alibi that he was one kind of person as a writer, to be judged, let us say, solely in terms of his novels, and quite another as a private individual".[258]

Even Orthodox secular artists seem to be fundamentally concerned about the importance of an artist's personal life: According to Henry's interpretation, "Internal connection between the invisible aesthetic life and the ethical life is what Kandinsky calls spiritual".[259] Kandinsky combined his Russian Orthodox spiritual background with the ideals of theosophy in his view on the importance of the artist's personal lifestyle. He supposed that the artist's "deeds, feelings and thoughts, as those of every man, create a spiritual atmosphere which is either pure or poisonous...These deeds and thought are materials for his creations, which themselves exercise influence on the spiritual atmosphere".[260] Tarkovsky also urged artists to be "morally responsible for the acts they intend to transfer … [into their art]"[261] and warned them not to separate their art and cinema as such from life

[254] Berlin 1978, 128.
[255] Ibid.
[256] Berlin 1978, 129.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Berlin 1978, 130.
[259] Henry 2009, 19.
[260] Kandinsky 1977, 54-55.
[261] Trakovsky, D. the documentary 2008.

as it is and to serve art without becoming its victim.[262] What moral responsibility means for an artist is in fact in what he believes in rather than what he does on a daily basis.

The West and pro-western oriented thinkers seem to follow the 'French' model that Isaiah Berlin formulated. Kant described genius as an example who creates the work of merit and it is his artistic excellence that needs to be pursued and not his moral life.[263] Jung exclaimed in wonder "How can we doubt that it is his art that explains the artist and not the insufficiencies and conflicts of his personal life?"[264] Heidegger also points out the supremacy of the work of art over the artist's personal limitations since "Art is the origin of an artwork and the artist"[265] and "the master's presence in the work is the only true presence".[266] Rank describes a romantic type who confuses life with art, he is dramatic or lyrical, acts the piece instead of objectifying it. Goethe overcame all this at the expense of his productive power. Productive power transforms a romantic type into a classical type. In other words Rank is suggesting here that the artist's intention is destined to failure if he decides to subject his art to his self and life. This is what Tarkovsky also proclaimed: "It's you who must belong to art, not vice versa".[267] Rank continues the Jungian line: an artist "is his work, and not a human being",[268] and "it is not Goethe who creates *Faust*, but *Faust* which creates Goethe".[269] Yet, Rank is more careful about diminishing the human side of an artist, which is also part of his creative self. He argues more specifically that an artist lives his life in his art, unlike Jung who suggests that creative energy sweeps away the artist's personality. Rank's view seems to be closer to the Orthodox notion of synergetic cooperation where none of the wills eliminate or diminish the other: "The artist… finds a constructive middle way: he avoids the complete loss of himself in life, not by remaining in the negative attitude, but by living himself out entirely in creative work".[270] The suggestions point out that the artist does not exist without his art; that only his art reveals his authentic personality.

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[262] Ibid.
[263] Kant 2009, §47, 309.
[264] Jung 1933, 174.
[265] Heidegger, 1969, 44.
[266] Ibid, ('origin' here must imply to the reality, in which they reveal their true essence rather than the source of inspiration)
[267] Trakovsky, D. 2008, documentary.
[268] Jung 1933, 172.
[269] Jung 1933, 174.
[270] Rank 1923, 373.

The Russian way of looking at an artist the creator was not alien to the French enlightenment, which probably influenced Russian thought in the 19th century. The artist for Diderot is "an example par excellence of the free man. As a producer he works from inner necessity; art is his life and in this work he appears as his own master, creating from impulse but guided by an ideal of truth and correcting himself for the perfection of the result and not from fear of others".[271] Diderot obliged an artist to be a moral agent in his work. He considered the didactic concept of old religious art as a model and found a secular substitute to it in the image of morality, which, Schapiro reasonably believed, "in our time could become an instrument of despotism and a support of mediocrity".[272]

One may be surprised by the records of the ascetic devotion of western artists, which pose them not as immoral as some Orthodox might expect them to be. Leonardo Da Vinci himself proposed a rather ascetic rule "the painter or draftsman ought to be solitary, in order that the well-being of the body may not sap the vigour of the mind".[273] Cenini urged artists to lead a life of chastity that would keep their hands steady and their vision pure, he also warned them to avoid the company of women.[274] Vasari's account of the life of Fra Angelico also presents him as a rather ascetic personality living in chastity away from earthly distractions.[275] The element of devotion and ascetic self-denial in Renaissance art derived from the idea that was beautifully formulated by Fra Angelico "He who wishes to paint Christ's story must live with Christ".[276] However, while the Orthodox see prayerful contemplation as a way of 'living with Christ', the Renaissance artist like Michelangelo spent months living in marble canyons in order to feel and experience the life and nature of the material intended for the work.

Western thought is perfectly aware of the personality-split at the heart of the phenomenon of "the artist". It has been wisely suggested that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material".[277] Berdyaev distinguishes between the artist's self and his own creation and claims that "A

[271] Schapiro 1998, 207.
[272] Schapiro 1998, 205.
[273] Leonardo Da Vinci, Goldwater, 1972, 55.
[274] Cenini, Goldwater 1972, 23.
[275] Vasari 2008, 170.
[276] Fra Angelico, quoted by Maurice Dennis, in Goldwater 1972, 380.
[277] Eliot 1950, 54.

creator may be demonic and his demonism may leave its imprint upon his creation. But great creation cannot be demonic, neither can creative value and creative ecstasy which gives it birth".[278] Maritain proclaims the same truth: "If only he contrives a good piece of woodwork or jewel work, the fact of a craftsman's being spiteful or debauched is immaterial, just as it is immaterial for a geometer to be a jealous or wicked man, if only his demonstrations provide us with geometrical truth".[279] Maritain rightly suggests that a crucial distinction must be made between the creative Self and the self-centred ego.[280] He compares this distinction with the distinction between human person as *person* and as *individual*. Likewise, "Creative innocence is in no way moral innocence. It is … of an ontological, not a moral nature".[281] The person of the artist reveals itself through a spiritual and creative communication, not in terms of a material and or individual context.[282]

Gadamer noted that the artist's world "is never simply a strange world of magic, of intoxication, of dream to which the play, sculptor or viewer is swept away, but it is always his own world to which he comes to belong more fully by recognizing himself more profoundly in it".[283] Maritain utters the same truth: "the poetic perception which animates art catches and manifests the inner side of Things, the more it involves at the same time a disclosure and manifestation of the human Self".[284] Creative force in western thought is considered as a chance for the artist's personal deification. He longs for the embodiment of his belief and his longing for the eternal. Dyotima asserts that "A poet's progeny are not human children, but an immortal glory and remembrance".[285] The longing for eternal life is so powerful in the artist that it overcomes his fallen desires: "The artist takes refuge, with all his own experience only from the life of *actuality*, which for him spells mortality and decay".[286]

The longing for the truth naturally requires a greater sacrifice, which can explain what perhaps unconsciously motivated Freud to suggest that artists have exceptionally wounded

[278] Berdyaev 1962, 153.
[279] Maritain 1954, 50.
[280] Maritain 1954, 141.
[281] Maritain 1954, 374.
[282] Khomiakov's interpretation of sobornost describes the 'individual' as a lonely and isolated being, while the person is the one who belongs to the universe and is prepared to share his being with others. See khomiakov 1955, Vol 2, p.66.
[283] Gadamer 2004, 129.
[284] Maritain 1954, 19.
[285] Plato, *Symposium*, 209d.
[286] Rank 1923, 38.

personalities and they stand outside the standard of normality. The secular artist, whose creative will emerges from his unconscious, has to struggle with his conscious self, his ego. The Jungian perspective describes the creative will as totally opposed to the human will of the artist and this is the cause of his inner conflict: "The artist's life cannot be otherwise than full of conflicts, for two forces are at war within him – on the one hand the common human longing for happiness, satisfaction and security in life, and on the other a ruthless passion for creation which may go so far as to override every personal desire".[287] Rank specifies the same idea further by identifying the inner conflict with the inward struggle between will and impulse, which an artist shares with the neurotic.[288] Jung believes that the creative force sweeps away the artist's ego against his will and it remains "nothing more than a helpless observer of events".[289] Otto Rank, however, is more positive about the artist's ego and he thinks that the fact that most artists are narcissistic has a good purpose. He sees certain balance between the artist's ego and his shattered life. In fact, the artist's ego is present only in his person, not in his art. Rank is especially fascinated by the fact that the personal weaknesses protect artists form their own genius: "What makes Goethe the highest type of artist in our eyes is not really his work, any more than it is his civic life, which served rather to protect him from his own genius than to enhance it".[290]

Western psychoanalysis offers enormous material to Orthodox Christian scholarship about the peculiarities of artistic personality, that could be employed for pastoral purposes. Berdyaev agrees with western psychoanalysis which confirms that fallen human nature provides a fertile soil for the conception of the creative impulse, through the awareness of its fallen state: "Creativity was born out of imperfection and insufficiency"[291] and this explains why "the too perfect cease to create".[292] Creative energy itself is an unexplained force that acts as a divine will in the human being, which is usually called ecstasy. Berdyaev discerns that the freedom of creative spirit presents the phenomenon of genius as inherently religious as opposed to the 'worldly'. He is also fully aware that being different from the rest of humankind is not sufficient for claiming the specific talent of genius: "Only

[287] Jung 1933, 173.
[288] Rank 1923, 52.
[289] Jung 1933, 174.
[290] Rank 1923, 82.
[291] Berdyaev 1962, 297.
[292] Ibid.

he is capable of this sacrifice, who in it can transcend the bounds of 'the world".[293] Being different is the price for his ability to 'transcend the bounds of the world'. Jung poetically utters the same truth: "there are hardly any exceptions to the rule that a person must pay dearly for the divine gift of the creative fire".[294] A creative personality, unlike the pragmatic type, sees his own place in the world in ontological terms by discerning the essentials of all things that connect him with the Creator. It is a "special sense of the world, a special tension of the will, a special power of desire of something other, which may be confirmed and developed".[295] Creative energy brings out the world in a concentrated shape, and the process of concentration is likely to require an enormous mental and emotional exhaustion, although ultimately a fulfilling experience. A creative experience shares the common principle with the trauma of childbirth except for its physical aspect. The creative process makes the artist suffer the pain of labour and then fulfils him with the joy of a new life. Rank points out that the Roman idea of genius as a begetter contains the individual urge to reproduction, "a collective element, which points beyond the individual, in a way that is not true of the Egyptian 'Ka' or Greek daimon, both of which are purely personal".[296]

Rank believes that "the inhibitions, then… are the ego's necessary protections against being swallowed by creativity".[297] Ego here is presented as something that struggles against creativity yet keeps the balance between the artist person and the artist creator. In Rank's view an artistic genius needs his ego in order to not to lose himself entirely. It reminds us of the Christian concept of humility brought by repentance. Sin is not desirable but acknowledging it protects one from pride.[298] However, Rank's ego here is not the equivalent of the Christian understanding of pride but it is rather its opposite. Rank's interpretation of 'ego' represents the fallen self of the artist that causes him nothing else but regret that results in an artistic 'escape'. Berdyaev argues that repentance, unless it is illumined by the creative gaze towards a higher reality, "may not bear fruit and may lead to feebleness, to spiritual suicide; Repentance may lead to a thickening of the darkness within

[293] Berdyaev 1962, 161.
[294] Jung 1933, 173.
[295] Berdyaev 1962, 163.
[296] Rank1923, 20.
[297] Rank 1923, 386.
[298] The Orthodox prayer for the departed (Panikhida) summarizes the problem of sin: "there is no one who lives without sinning".

oneself".[299] In this view, Rank and Berdyaev both suggest that repentance has to be followed by a rebirth, which is "already in the creative impulse".[300]

Freud's theory about artistic impulse springing from the dissatisfaction with life contains an element of truth even though artists are not the only people who are thus dissatisfied. Artists like every other human being desire a happy life. Tarkovsky always wanted to have a comfortable home, but he never had one.[301] The image of a homeless artist creates a picture of a *kenotic* personality who sublimates his dissatisfaction into transforming his desired object within the realm of the eternal: the archetypal home is desired by all, whether consciously or unconsciously. This is what Baudelaire saw as "to be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world".[302]

The artist is able "to immortalize his mortal life"[303] by transforming his need into the quest for its eternal archetype and give its materialised expression a universal value. Tarkovsky believes that Picasso is one of those artists who failed to find harmony in the world's disharmony.[304] Dissatisfaction in fact accumulates the artistic desire for the eternal archetype, for what the world is lacking. It is obvious that imagination works harder under pressure than it works under indulging circumstances. The lack of happiness, rest and comfort forces the artists to seek a safe zone in art where they can experience a special realm, which in the language of the Gospel might translate into the calling of Christ: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".[305] Pressure is usually thought to be a force limiting one's freedom, yet, the history of art demonstrates that it is apparently the attachment to earthly well-being that limits the freedom of an artist's conscience more than the prohibitions and restrictions applied externally.

Berdyaev denounces the idea of artistic escape by defining the meaning of necessity as "an evil, sub-conscious freedom, a freedom not illumined by the Logos".[306] He distinguishes false freedom, as the world's necessity, from an authentic freedom, which is "not a realm of

[299] Berdyaev 1962, 154.
[300] Berdyaev 1962, 155.
[301] Trakovsky 2009, documentary.
[302] Baudelaire 1995, 9.
[303] Rank 1923, 39.
[304] Tarkovsky 2006, 145.
[305] Matthew 11:28.
[306] Berdyaev 1962, 139.

chance and wilfulness".[307] Berdyaev's image of creative freedom presents the artist in a rather controversial manner: "In the dark womb of life there ever remains some rebellious and God-resisting blood and the pulse of free, creative instinct".[308] Patriarch Bartholomew also explains that "free human creativity, following the steps of Prometheus, rose up against the 'god of morality,' all too often a police god, a sadistic, castrating father".[309] Yet, Berdyaev, like Kontoglou complains more articulately that the individualist rebels sometimes mistake freedom for emptiness. Someone who knows what he wants strives towards the goal "while an Individualist says: I want what I want, leaving the emptiness as an object of his will".[310] Rebelling for the sake of claiming uniqueness reveals the slavish psychology. True freedom of creative will is "something that proceeds from within, out of immeasurable and inexplicable depths, not from without, not from the world's necessity".[311] Berdyaev unlike Kontoglou differentiates between the masterpieces of great art and certain so called artistic attempts for claiming originality for its own sake. The myth about the artist genius enjoying the absolute freedom of saying and doing whatever he dreams is vastly exaggerated even from the western point of view. Even though Maritain confirms "We painters take the same liberties as poets and madmen take"[312] but he is also aware that "To make fun of the rules, in proclaiming the liberty of art, is just an excuse provided by foolishness to mediocrity".[313] The artist needs an extra freedom of even a daring expression, yet, an absolute and irrational freedom can hardly produce a great masterpiece. Following instinct alone leads to a failure while both instinct and reason together are the active ingredients in poetic intuition.[314] Therefore true Creativity of the spirit is neither free nor conventional, but it is "bound to the making of the work, which is an object enclosed in a particular genus and category".[315] T. S Eliot accurately pointed out that the poet can reach the impersonality of the emotion only through surrendering himself "wholly to the work to be done".[316] Commitment to finding the correct and convincing form is the guide to creative intuition and it sacrifices the artist's ego: "the more the artist

[307] Berdyaev 1962, 135.
[308] Berdyaev 1962, 161.
[309] Bartholomew I, Clement 2007, 157.
[310] Berdyaev 1962, 142.
[311] Berdyaev 1962, 134-135.
[312] Maritain 1954, 24.
[313] Maritain 1954, 64.
[314] Maritain 1954, 65.
[315] Maritain 1954, 236.
[316] Eliot 1950, 59.

achieves in idea, the less disposed will he be to follow this up by personal success".[317] The freedom of individual creation may contain a danger but it is not bound to selfishness.

The artist represents an archetypal phenomenon of being human. Jung mentions "as a human being he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is man in a higher sense – he is "collective man" one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind".[318] Thinking in archetypal terms brings us back to the Christian concept of man-*anthropos*, and presents him as a human creator who, whether consciously or unconsciously shares creativity as a divine energy of God the Creator. According to Jung "the secret of artistic creation …. is to be found in a return to the state of *participation mystique* – to that level of experience at which it is man who lives, and not the individual, and at which the weal or woe of the single human being does not count, but only human existence".[319] Whether the artist is a good citizen, a neurotic, a fool, or a criminal "it does not explain the poet"[320] just as the quality of genius is "broader than the man of genius".[321] The creative personality is not estimated according to what kind of person he is but according to what he creates. He belongs to history rather than to the particular moment in which he lives. The real self of the artist is his creative self – where his heart reveals. The artist is not what he does on a daily basis but the eternal values that he translates into a visual form.

2.15. Evaluation of Berdyaev's theory of 'Genius and Holy Man'

Berdyaev's rather controversial theory proposes a similarity between the phenomena of the genius and the holy man. Berdyaev's courageous statement "Genius is the sainthood of daring rather than obedience"[322] may come as a shock to the conservative wing of Orthodox believers. Orthodox tradition knows the concept of the Holy Man, a charismatic *Staretz* who lives the ascetic life and guides the faithful into the revelation of truth, but it has rarely considered the phenomenon of genius as a mode of Christian life. Berdyaev acknowledges that the two differ in their nature and function, but they both are necessary for enlightening the world. Berdyaev's evaluation can be understood as his response to his contemporary

[317] Rank 1923, 400.
[318] Jung 1933, 173.
[319] Jung 1933, 176.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Berdyaev 1962, 162.
[322] Berdyaev 1962, 161.

Russia's tendency towards "Starchestvomania" that introduced monasticism as the highest level of spiritual maturity and encouraged a zealous 'competition' among Christians. What Berdyaev is proposing here is not to 'monasticize' the artist but precisely to eliminate the hierarchical rivalry between the two vocations and demonstrate the beauty of both. Berdyaev must have had reason to exclaim: "It would have been a religious crime before God and before men if Pushkin, in fruitless efforts to be a saint, had ceased to write poetry".[323] In fact Berdyaev condemned the tendency, which was perfectly illustrated by the example of Nikolai Gogol's tragedy earlier.

No philosopher has ever managed to explain fully what makes man a genius. Kant placed the creative genius above the law. Schelling affirmed the autonomous status of the genius who "constitutes the highest law-governed qualities".[324] Coleridge, on the other hand, believed that genius is not lawless and what constitutes genius is "the power of acting creatively under laws of own origination".[325] A genius may be free from human laws but he can never escape the supreme law that nourishes his genius. Schopenhauer's definition of genius meant someone whose intellect exceeds his will.[326]

The most striking element that both the artist genius and the holy man share is their tendency towards solitude as a voluntary withdrawal from society. The idea of a solitary artist always seemed strange to secular minds since the Renaissance that saw the flight from the world as "the property of all melancholics to display hatred toward human life, to flee the society of human beings, and to be in a continuous state of sorrow and fear".[327] However, Manetti's concept of *homo faber* allowed a legitimate place for solitary retirement from society where "a kind of rare prophet-scholar like Moses might fulfil his genius free of worldly distraction".[328] This appears to be closer to the Eastern perception of ascetic alienation. Solitude in its authentic meaning "lies outside the contradiction between individualism and universalism, hence there may be both universalism and individualism in

[323] Berdyaev 1950, 160.
[324] Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, in Cooper 1997, 173.
[325] Coleridge, quoted by Maritain 1954, 64.
[326] Schopenhauer 2009, 317.
[327] Giovanni da Concorreggio, *Practica Nova*, quoted by Brann 2001, p.17.
[328] See Brann 2001, 58.

solitude".[329] The ascetic flees the world not in order to reject it but in order to embrace it on a greater level through prayerful contemplation.

Alienation is not a sign of melancholy or depression but it subsists as a natural response to overflowing love for all. A genius, like an ascetic is not trying to deny the world but to transform it. The sacrifice of a creative genius is not less than that of an ascetic: "He has to "give up the quiet havens of life, must renounce the building of his own house, the safe and assured ordering of his personality".[330] Therefore an artist as genius is 'not of this world' and cannot conform to the requirements of this world. Leonardo Da Vinci searched for truth in the most unconventional ways even in the darkest elements of fallen human nature. His endless experiments and tireless research in human anatomy and biology reveal his fervent quest for studying the rudiments and details of God's Creation. Even his grotesque images reveal his passionate interest in expressive and poignant presentation of the natural emotions of Man as *anthropos* with all its oddities and peculiarities. Berdyaev detects a certain kind of demonism, but he believes that in his creations "the evil in Leonardo's nature has already been consumed and his demonism transformed into another kind of being, by passing through the creative ecstasy of the genius".[331] Therefore according to Berdyaev the creative searching itself has a purifying and sanctifying power. It transforms a demonic seed into genius and purges it through *catharsis*.

In certain ways there can also be discerned a similarity between artistic genius and fools for Christ's sake, who always stand outside every institution. They are seen as different, usually referred to as mentally disturbed, giving them the freedom to confront any society, including the faithful, who betray the truth of Christ. No external authority has power over them. Likewise, even though artists are usually bound to obey their commissioners, the conscience of the artist genius has to be free from pressure. Rank points out that "there is always a distinct reaction of the artist not only against every kind of collectivization, but against the changing of his own person, his work, and his ideology into an eternalization-symbol for a particular epoch".[332] The artist genius needs a space for rethinking a particular into a broader sense and for transforming a concrete into its general archetype. The artist's

[329] Berdyaev 1950, 147.
[330] Berdyaev 1950, 161.
[331] Berdyaev 1950, 153.
[332] Rank 1923, 406.

attachment to everyday life deprives him of a wider and a clearer picture of reality. The artist needs an emotional, mental and even a physical distance from his actual reality in order to keep his judgment objective and unbiased. His flight from the world is nothing else but escape from the universal temptation of turning the eternal truth into a transient experience. Artistic vision consists of the natural tendency towards seeing the world from the perspective of eternity, and Western artists are no exception to this tendency.

Talent and genius obviously share the same nature but they differ in their quality. Talent is a gift but the talent of genius is evaluated and perfected by permanent study and endless pursuits in experiments. Berdayev is rightly assuming that talent as a gift does not require a sacrifice, whereas "in genius, man's whole spiritual nature palpitates with his desire for another type of being".[333] Only a genuinely loving and self-giving sacrifice may turn talent into genius: "Talent is obedience; genius is boldness and daring. Talent is of 'this world'; genius of another".[334] The true resemblance between an ascetic and a genius is that they both possess a certain prophetic element and they both are fully committed to their mission.

The Kantian idea that a genius creates a work of merit indicates not only the superiority of his gift but also the greater freedom of his artistic daring. Gombrich clarified that following the rules is never enough in art if one does not possess a certain courage to transgress them out of freedom: "Poor artists did not achieve anything when trying to apply these laws, while great masters could break them and yet achieve a new kind of harmony no one had thought of before".[335] Tarkovsky's view summarizes the same idea: " A true artist does not search or experiment – he finds".[336] A finding, a discovery, is what makes one a genius, but experiment and searching are also not to be diminished. Artists' toils belong to their 'earthly' space, which is full of struggles and sorrow, yet they share the fruit of their works with incredible ease. They put enormous effort into their work before arriving on a stage, but they appear on the stage as if they are "the first from whose soul those parts emerge as an everlasting whole".[337] This spontaneity of genial creation gives an impression of creating ex nihilo. However, it is in the very freedom of presentation, in the clarity of expression that one is tempted to compare the artistic genius with God the creator who

[333] Berdyaev 1950, 163.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Gombrich 2007, 35.
[336] Tarkovsky 2006, 128.
[337] Goethe 1980, 105.

creates through the Word freely and easily, without suffering and without struggle. He truly resembles God the Creator, not in that he seems to be creating out of freedom, but more through his possession of a universal vision outside of time.

Both the artist and ascetic put their efforts into cultivating their cosmic knowledge. Yet, the essential difference between the holy man and an artist genius is that the holy man is conscious of his urge for God and seeks unity with Him, while the artist is searching him intuitively through God-given creative energy. Fr Sophrony remembers his Athonite life when his mind was so much occupied with the thoughts of another state of being that "there was no room for any other art, except the 'art' of getting close to the divine eternal love of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit".[338] Fr Sophrony's creative spirit has found its fulfilment in ascetic struggle for attaining the likeness of God while incorporating his artistic gifts in the liturgical service by producing icons and wall painting at the monastery in England.[339] The ascetic is perfecting and reconciling his whole self by directing his creative spirit towards perfecting his person, while the artist sacrifices his human perfection to the cultivation of his creative spirit. They both consciously turn their faces towards the eternal and unconsciously inspire the world to do the same. They both are rewarded for their choice of being 'not of this world' through seeking eternity in their art as the place of their belonging. Both fear mortality and both seek immortality. Their will to "immortalization arises from the fear of life"[340] that ends in decay and corruption. The same fear drives men to seek safety in the eternal,[341] but it is also the same fear that makes one look up to heaven and desire God's grace and his mercy at least intuitively.

Tarkovsky calls Leonardo a poetic genius "for it would be ridiculous to call him an artist or Bach a composer, Shakespeare a playwright and Tolstoy a writer for they are poets and geniuses".[342] The poet is the one who sees the eternal in the concrete and concretizes the eternal. He sees the archetypes of things, their inner *logos*, their essential meaning and he sees them in an eternal realm. His vision very much resembles the prayerful contemplation which is an essential in the ascetic life. Tarkovsky claims that he, as other artists, is a "man to whom God gave the possibility of being a poet, meaning, of praying in another manner

[338] Sakharov 2003, 133.
[339] The monastery of St John the Baptist in Essex.
[340] Rank 1923, 43.
[341] Rank 1923, 92.
[342] Tarkovsky 2006, 133.

than the one used by the faithful in a cathedral".[343] He believes that he is "ordained to be a poet" and regards his calling or a vocation is essentially religious and not a "worldly" idea.

Being ordained to be a poet is being given a gift of a deeper vision; a sense of contemplating the essences of things beyond their material appearances; Man is "called to be a wise poet whose task is to decipher the revelation of the cosmos, to render fully conscious creation's song of praise".[344] The poetic personality possesses an exceptionally sensitive nature: "As the mystic suffers divine things, the poet is here to suffer the things of this world, and to suffer them so much that he is enabled to speak them and himself out".[345] Baudelaire calls genius "nothing more nor less than *childhood recovered* at will" [346] referring to the childlike tireless curiosity, wonder and the joy of discovery. The fact that "The poet is a person who has the psychology and imagination of a child"[347] indicates that his poetic intuition is more predisposed to the good than to evil. It does not follow that an artist who responds exceptionally to divine inspiration and the offering of divine grace is necessarily holier than the rest of the people, but it obviously signifies that the ascetic's sensitivity to divinely inspired impulse is more refined than that of the other people.

Summary

This chapter revealed the artist as fundamentally linked to God through the sacredness of the creative impulse. God involves in his creative work a human person who can share his divine energy and creative urge. Maritain suggested that the guide in the understanding of creative intuition is the recognition of the existence of a spiritual unconscious, or rather, preconscious, of which Plato and the ancient wise men were well aware, and the disregard of which, in favour of the Freudian unconscious alone, is a sign of the dullness of our times".[348] The examination of both eastern and western approaches to creativity pointed out the fact that modern Orthodox discussions over the subject of western art often fail to show a pastoral approach. A human being whose desire for immortality takes a creative form strives towards *Theosis* through the creative gift and cares for God's creation as more than *oikonomos*.

[343] Tarkovsky 2006, 166.
[344] Bartholomew, in Clement 2007, 101-102.
[345] Maritain 1954, 140.
[346] Baudelaire 1995, 8.
[347] Tarkovsky 2006,137.
[348] Maritain 1954, 91.

St. Gregory Palamas summarized rather doctrinally the patristic understanding of human creativity as a gift that places humans above angels and appears as a distinctive feature that explains the human uniqueness of being created in the Image of God.[349] Even though angels are selfless and bodiless beings, they can serve God but they are not designed to create and make things. Kiprian Kern recalls other patristic sources suggesting creativity to be the rationale of being created in the image of God. Kiprian Kern argues that the theory has a firm foundation in patristic theology.[350]

Yet creativity in its authentic God-centred sense differs from pseudo-creativity which should be discerned through the wisdom of the Gospel: "Each tree is known by its own fruit".[351] The world can overcome its finitude and mortality only by relating to God even outside the strictly set ecclesiastical boundaries. The tragedy of the Fall consisted in man's rejection of his role as the priest of creation by making himself God in creation. Christ came to the world in order to do "what Adam did not do: to be the priest of creation".[352] According to Zizioulas' observation, the steward of creation relates to nature by what he does, whereas the priest of creation relates to nature by what he is: "When an artist creates, he or she wishes to bring about something of eternal value and significance".[353] The priest likewise, "takes the material world in his hands … and lifts it up to acquire an eternal divine meaning".[354] The priest brings as a sacrifice not grapes and wheat but bread and wine - the work of human hands and transforms their perishable nature into the eternal sacrifice through the sacrament of love. In the same way the artist brings his own creation, which he made from God's given material and gives it an eternal value through offering it to all to share in the name of love. Speaking in archetypal terms, regardless of the artist's belonging to a religious affiliation, his artistic gift of linking God and people turns him into a liturgical being.[355] The artistic receptivity and ability to share the life impulse itself contains a sacred and deifying quality even if it is not acknowledged consciously.

[349] Palamas, PG, Cap. 63, col. 1165 C, quoted by Kiprian Kern 1950, Ch. 7.
[350] Kern lists the following sources: Theodoret of Cyrus, "Quest. in Genesim", 20, Basil of Seleucia, Oratio I, 3; II. 1; II, 4, Anastasius of Sinai, "Questio" 89, John of Damascus, De octo spirit. nequitiae", Photius of Contsantinople, "Ad Amphiloch." 253.
[351] Luke 6:44.
[352] Zizioulas 2003.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid.

Chapter 3

A Theological Analysis of the Rationale of Artistic Presentation

Introduction: Orthodox Christian Objections to Western Artistic Interest in Naturalism

A widespread view within modern Orthodox scholarship regards the alienation from naturalistic depiction as the main distinguishing virtue of Orthodox Christian iconography. Therefore, naturalistic manner of painting tends to be exclusively attributed to western art as an element that makes western art inferior to iconography. Some Orthodox scholars even condemn naturalistic resemblance since, as they believe, "it has its aim to make you think that creations are not paintings, but nature!"[1] Considering the Orthodox thinkers' disapproval of realistic presentation, a western Christian might be surprised by Florensky's assertion that "The Church's understanding of art was, is, and will be realism. This means that the Church, 'the pillar and foundation of truth,' requires only one thing: the truth".[2]

Fr Pavel Florensky discerned that people often overlook the difference between realism and naturalism, and even between realism and illusionism.[3] Fr Pavel's definition of realism as different from naturalism refers to ontological truth versus the visual resemblance of outward appearance of things. He argues that artistic presentation pretending to be realistic is nothing but illusionism that "wants to be a match for sensory reality, but for all its tricks it never attains reality and at best, if it did attain it, it would become unnecessary as art".[4] Father Pavel assumes that naturalistic art "only attempts to deceive us that it is a match for reality".[5] He objects even to a naturalistically painted apple as an artistic attempt "to deceive the eye".[6]

Florensky's differentiation between the truth and the appearance of the visible world obviously shares Plato's view of the deceptiveness of the material world: "There is nothing genuinely essential. Everything in the world is illusory. Everything merely seems, all is conventional and deceptive".[7] Therefore, the concept of authentic reality for Florensky

[1] Kontoglou 2004, 40.
[2] Florensky 1996, 81.
[3] Florensky 2002, 180.
[4] Florensky 2002, 181.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Florensky 2002, 104.
[7] Florensky 2002, 182.

consists in an eschatological form that is not of this world, but it has to be perceived through prayerful contemplation.

Modern Orthodox scholars often tend to attribute realism in terms of the authentic and more direct presentation of the truth to Orthodox iconography rather exclusively. Tendency towards naturalism on the other hand, they believe, expresses the secularization taking place in western Christian consciousness. The Orthodox make legitimate claims that icons are not portraits of saints but present the symbolic image of the prototype for the purpose of its veneration. However, persistent references to the authenticity of a symbolic representation as opposed to the deceptive nature of western imagery, and establishing a certain hierarchy between the two often tends to be exaggerated and slightly overstated. Reducing the authentic use of mimetic presentation to iconography alone raises the question whether Orthodox scholarship sees liturgical art as isolated from every other artistic experience revealed by human history.

This chapter starts with the discussion on the earliest examples of artworks followed by the earliest theories on art manifested in ancient discussions on *mimesis* in art from Plato to Plotinus. The following sections will illustrate the artistic reality of the times of Plato's theories. The appreciations of life-likeness in antiquity and Byzantium show how the Byzantine understanding of art transformed from earlier times to more elaborate conceptions following the iconoclastic controversy. The sections on art as poetry and play will question the view proposed by some Orthodox theologians about naturalistic resemblance as a primary aim of western art as they will show the rationale of western art as seen by western scholars and consider its theological value from the Orthodox Christian point of view.

The Chapter aims at appreciating the mastery of artistic presentation in the context of a human relationship with God in broader terms rather than viewing it in a strictly ecclesiastical framework. The concluding section will answer the question what is art and what does it signify for the Christian consciousness even outside the liturgical framework? This chapter will try to establish the elements that unite all the arts, including both western secular and Orthodox iconographic forms, as well as to emphasize the principal factors that differentiate one from the other. The real difference between iconography and western artistic styles will be observed within the difference of their function in Christian worship,

rather than merely dismissing the value of western art from a liturgical perspective for its 'failure' to be an icon.

3.1. Theological context of mimesis in prehistoric painting

Any discussion on art can be supported by referring to the earliest extant examples of artistic creations. The basic feature of every artistic creation of earlier times is undeniably based on the concept of recognisability. Prehistoric art might serve as the best example of art in its pure form since the intuitive element in it naturally prevails over the rational. Calling the prehistoric art 'primitive' can easily mislead one into thinking of its qualitative inferiority. Prehistoric art usually referred as 'primitive art' reveals the rationale of art first of all as part of a ritual, yet, it values immensely the importance of technical execution. Gombrich justly emphasises the technical excellence of many primitive artists and points out that the word primitive by no means implies to the lack of knowledge of their craft or their inferiority.[8] On the contrary, its primitive quality can be seen in its subconscious quest for divine and supernatural powers. The theories of art and its appreciation emerged and developed many thousands of years after artistic expression began to occupy a central place in worship and religious consciousness.

The disputes over the meaning of prehistoric cave paintings started since the discovery of the caves in Altamira by western scholars in the second half of the 19th century. Altamira, being the first significant discovery, caused particularly greater disputes than the other later discoveries in the caves of Lascaux and Chauvet. Prejudices against the primitives often misled western scholars and made them doubt the age of paintings. The main objection against attributing them to the upper Palaeolithic period was caused by the reservation that they were too good to be attributed to the hands of 'primitive savages'.[9] The first historians of Palaeolithic art[10] in the 1860-70s simply assumed that the paintings had no function and they were mere artworks for their own sake. The view was well supported by the popular bohemian creed of the time proclaiming 'art for art's sake' at the beginning of the 20th century, the utilitarian theories about prehistoric art took over and the theories of hunting magic developed.

[8] Gombrich 2007, 44.
[9] Harle published the views in 1881 assuming the forgery of Altamira paintings dated by him by 1870-s, he revisited the cave in the 1903 and realized his earlier mistake. Bahn & Vertut 1989, 23,25.
[10] Such as Latret and Mortillet, Bahn & Vertut 1989, 49.

It is impossible to be sure what a prehistoric painter thought or desired when he painted animals on cave walls. Considering the hunting experience of the primitives, one of the most celebrated views is their belief that the use of painting granted them a magic power over the prey. It should certainly be mentioned that the meaning of magic for a modern person must be different from its meaning in the upper Palaeolithic period. The image of a wounded animal on the wall might signify their wish to conquer the animal and obtain their daily food. Hauser appropriately evaluates the idea of what painting might signify for a cave painter, for whom "the world of fiction and pictures, the sphere of art and mere imitation, was not yet a special province of its own, different and separated from empirical reality".[11] Gombrich reasonably believes that we can only understand the meaning and importance of cave-paintings if we enter the mind of a prehistoric man by observing the remains of something 'primitive' in our own selves. For a refined intellectual of modern days, art may be something nice to look at, but for the primitive men it was something powerful to use.[12] Gombrich is also right in suggesting that even though we may not be moved by superstitious beliefs today about a chance of harming a friend or a hero by harming his picture, but we would still feel reluctant about harming their pictures.[13] It would be idolatrous and even blasphemous if a Christian makes the images of things for the purpose of exercising power over them, but for a Palaeolithic man it must have had a different connotation. Employing magic powers in the process of fulfilling their wishes does not necessarily refer to some dark and evil power, but it could also embody a primitive form of prayer for the daily nourishment.

It is also likely that not everyone in the tribe or the community would be able to produce accurate depictions of real objects, which refers to the special position of an artist as the one who depicts and visualizes the prayer of all and therefore takes up a duty, which the Christian language might denote as 'priestly'. This form of prayer associated with magic looks obviously primitive and superstitious from a Christian perspective, yet it has to be taken into account that killing an animal in Palaeolithic era derived out of the survival instinct and the desire to live, rather than merely sacrificing the animal for the sake of obtaining power. The good or evil nature of the 'magic' that the primitives performed can

[11] Hauser 1999, Vol.1, 5.
[12] Gombrich 2007 40.
[13] Gombrich 2007, 40.

be distinguished precisely by the nature of their purpose and motivation rather than simply in their devotion to magic.

Some scholars also detect a superstitious motivation in choosing the darkest places in caves for painting the animals and believe that instead of providing the eye with aesthetic enjoyment, they were meant to be accommodated in "definite spots considered particularly suitable for magic".[14] It may be true that the sensitivity of early humans to the energy levels of different places could be greater than that of the modern man overwhelmed by the noise and speed of modern life. However, it can also be argued that hiding the paintings could also imply to their cautiousness against certain threats whether it was an evil eye, natural forces, an animal or a hostile tribe. Painting or etching the outlines of animal figures in hidden places could easily provide them with the sense of safety while performing their rituals or at least keeping the images safe from various possible threats. The painted image was certainly a treasure worth guarding and protecting.

The view that the choice of places was conditioned by superstitious beliefs is especially true in the case of images that were over-drawn and over-painted one on top of the other. If the first figure drawn on a certain place on the panel produced a desired effect, if the result of magic act was satisfactory and the animal was killed, the same place might have been used over and over again in the hope of repeated victories.[15] The fact that a fresh drawing was needed to portray a new prey, suggests that the act of drawing was more important than the finished picture.[16]

The most expressive illustration of artistic experiments and enjoyment of creating in the prehistoric era can be detected in Palaeolithic paintings of the cave Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc.[17] The grouped paintings apparently prove that the 'primitive' painter possessed almost all the essential skills for naturalistic representation that the learned artists started exploring and evaluating further much later. The Chauvet painter was not satisfied with the visual resemblance alone but he also desired to convey the experience of animals' characters and the peculiarities of their characters expressed through their movements. The depictions of

[14] Hauser 1999, Vol.1, 5-6.
[15] Bahn & Vertut 1989, 151.
[16] The theory was proposed by archaeologist Marshack, see Bahn & Vertut 1989, 184.
[17] The research published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in May 2012 by the scientists from the University of Savoy, Aix-Marseille University and the Centre National de Préhistoire confirmed that the paintings were created by the people in the Aurignacian era, between 30,000 and 32,000 years ago.

horses[18] or lions[19] may well be seen as if the artist is drawing a group of horses and a group of lions running next to each other. The dramatic character of these two panels shows an incredibly elaborate artistry produced by a prehistoric painter. The figures are grouped according to similar species of animals. The exquisite modelling of shapes and highly graphical interpretation of the form speak of the observant eye of a master who painted the natural world tens of thousands of years ago.

By over-drawing one figure on top of the other the artist creates an impression as if he is trying to refer to the three dimensional space by indicating the sense of planes one behind the other. The elaborate modelling of animals' bodies and faces with the use of charcoal for their shadowed areas also creates an impression of the desire to make them look sculptural. In spite of the conventional view that over drawing one figure over the other was caused by the magic 'success' brought by the previous depiction, there is still the possibility that the artist had a visual interest as well. The impression is created that the painter desires to depict the animals in space, but does not yet know that he has to make the animal look smaller when he wants to place it further away. The heads of the horses and lions that are located behind the others are in fact larger than the front ones. This is almost the only 'error' that ruins the impression of depth and roundness of figures and presents the animals as if they are placed there in different planes (layers) one behind the other.

At the same time the outlines of animals over-drawn on top of one another from slightly inclined viewpoints creates a rhythm of their movement as if they are portrayed in an animated state. The cascades of the same animal's head drawn from slightly inclined angles show the attempt of making a dynamic picture. The prehistoric artist whether consciously or unconsciously achieved an element of the "motion picture", which is not very far from the modern discovery of animation that produced cinematography later. Painting the animal's feet in motion was certainly not enough for a caveman who wanted to achieve a perfect life-likeness that would enable supernatural powers to seize the prototype of the picture. A picture of a moving lion or a horse had to create an effect of their being alive and therefore being 'real'. The effect of movement was to be not merely 'told about' but felt and experienced, for which the depictions of the same figure from slightly aligned viewpoints provided a perfect technique. The desire to depict and master the living object

[18] Illustration №20.
[19] Illustration №21.

in motion obviously refers to an inherent interest to capture the element of life that he could best express through the impression of dynamism and motion. Even the schematized outlines of the figures consist of dynamically flowing and graceful contours full of movement and emotion.

Hauser rightly observes that in spite of the seeming childishness of cave paintings there are no parallels whatsoever between this prehistoric art and child art or the art of most of the more recent primitive races. He argues that children's drawings and the artistic production of contemporary primitive races are rationalistic, not sensory: children draw the shapes which they know should symbolise one or the other object: "they give a theoretically synthetic, not an optically organic picture of the object".[20] Therefore unlike a modern child a cave artist was interested in recording the visual world rather than systematize the theories about that world. The Palaeolithic man paints only what he sees while a child and a 'primitivist' paint what they know.

The interest in naturalism as demonstrated in cave paintings are inseparable from their religious meaning and purpose. The doubling of an image was essential for the magic to work. The belief in the power of acting on a doubled image must have been so great that any action taken against or for it was identical to what was going to happen to the original. The more life-like the depiction the greater were the chances of victory over the object. In Hauser's words: "It was precisely the magic purpose of this art that forced it to be naturalistic. The picture which bore no resemblance to its object was not merely faulty but senseless and purposeless".[21] The magic power would only exert on the original if the ritual was served upon a 'clone' as identical to the original as possible which "could not have been anything else but naturalistic".[22] Apart from the earlier stated 'magical' reasons, the primitive man's interest in naturalistic depiction obviously refers to the unconscious human quest to grasp the breath of life in the visible world, the desire to capture a greater resemblance than merely copying a static appearance of living creatures. Bringing the sense of life to a lifeless surface of rock would have already been a thrilling experience. It is probable that the artistry and religious consciousness of a prehistoric painter were inseparable, his artistic experiments "had first to become an instrument of magic and could

[20] Hauser 1999, Vol.1, 2.
[21] Hauser 1999, Vol.1, 7.
[22] Hauser 1999, Vol.1, 6-7.

only then become a form of art".[23] The preference for artistic expression over a mere depiction is already obvious in the earliest evidence of painting. Theologically speaking, the fact that a primitive artist can master the depiction of not just animals but their movement is likely to express his excitement about his discovery of something that never stops flowing and changing as long as the object is alive. The dynamism of liveliness and the breath of life inspire him to establish the link with the supernatural and the divine. We cannot know exactly in which terms the primitives connected the sense of life with their need to eat an animal that was once alive, but it is likely that the potential of expressing the sense of the passage of time in a visual form would excite the artistic eye and perception.

It is also perfectly possible that the creative eye of a prehistoric man would enjoy the process of recording its observations to such an extent that it would forget the function of animal depictions and simply enjoy the process of perfecting the resemblance. The process however was not merely technical but involved the ability to capture the living impulses of the moment while observing animals. As one of the prominent archaeologists put it, instead of taking a measurement, "they projected on to the rock an inner vision of the animal".[24] The process of practicing accuracy in painting through immediate optical impressions must have been quite similar to that of French impressionism, except that the creative intuition of the impressionists could not escape their somewhat burdening knowledge of academic painting. The simplicity and honesty of primitive paintings lies precisely in their being uninformed, in the intuitiveness of artistic findings that lets the paintings gain the transparency of experiencing the world through the senses rather than through reason alone. The earliest examples of cave paintings imply that human nature, regardless of epoch or culture, is designed to seek the reality beyond the visible and material form and experience the eternal sense of life in immortality, which can often be expressed and even desired unconsciously.

The process of learning from nature pushed all artists towards perfecting the skills of representation in an artistic form that involved endless experiments in visual observation. The first outline of a shadow must have been static, flat and immovable. However, the first cave paintings show that the first painter saw not only an object but saw it in action and desired to present it in movement. This element of conveying movement has become an

[23] Hauser 1999, Vol.1, 7.
[24] Breuil, quoted by Bahn & Vertut 1989, 118.

enormous dilemma in the whole history of art. Artists see an object not as existent by itself but as alive, moving, animated by the spirit that is breathed into it. Even the first paintings manifest that. The main and the most difficult task is precisely capturing this living spirit rather than merely outlining the bodily shape.

3.2. The significance of Greek thought in the development of later Christian understanding of art and aesthetics

The earliest artistic creations starting from the prehistoric cave paintings were concerned with naturalism or imitation of nature as long as the idea of imitation stood for portraying something recognizable. A familiar shape of an object aimed at telling the story. However, the tendency towards stylization, taking over in Mesopotamian or Egyptian art, suggested more interest to form as a symbol rather than to the form as a reflection of the real object. Prehistoric art, the art of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt were full of symbols corresponding to local beliefs: the widespread use of fantastic creatures implied to the preference of the imagination over the concern for mere copying. It is in Greek art that the artistic consciousness showed a special interest in observing and recording the natural form for its own sake. The visual object and hence matter itself became the object of artistic study and admiration. The degree of life-likeness became the test for the artistic excellence of an artwork.

The origin of artistic activity is apparently simultaneous with the origin of human existence and is undeniably tied to religious impulse. The theories on art, however, have appeared much later than when humans began creating art. The prehistoric artist was creating out of urge and impulse to communicate with higher powers. The artists of Messopotamia also served their gods and the Egyptians worshipped their pharaohs as earthly representatives of gods. So did the Greeks, until the humanistic ideals and secular elements started penetrating their worship. The gods of Greek mythology needed a perfect human shape, which was not unknown in the earlier times either. Although, in the past, the Egyptian artists managed to stress eternal values in the depiction of pharaohs by emphasizing the stiffness of their postures, and the uncertainty of their gaze directed towards the unknown. All the elements, including the symbolism in Egyptian sculpture, referred to the power of the unknown that belongs to the eternal realm. The Greeks on the other hand decided to make their gods more human and earthly. No other presentation could be more suitable for them than the ideal

shapes of athletic bodies. The temporary world in Greek art became the dwelling place of gods and claimed an eternal value for itself.

Some ancient historical accounts tell us about the popular appreciations of art in the ancient world. The visual resemblance of the depicted object was often overstated to such an extent that the narrators often found themselves slightly carried away in their praise of artistic excellence. Pliny is uncertain about how painting was invented but he is sure that 'it began by the outlining of a man's shadow'.[25] He reports that Apollodorus was the first artist to express realism and to confer fame on the paintbrush in its own right.[26] However, he proclaims Zeuxis of Heraclea, as the one who mastered realistic painting much more successfully. Pliny tells us the famous story of a contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasius, in which Zeuxis produced such a successful representation of grapes that birds flew up to the stage construction where it was hung. Then Parrhasius produced such a successful *trompe l'oeil* of a curtain that Zeuxis, puffed up with pride at the judgement of the birds, asked that the curtains be drawn aside and the picture revealed. When he realized his mistake, with an unaffected modesty, he conceded the prize, saying that "whereas he had deceived birds, Parrhasius had deceived him, an artist".[27] The level of deception tested the mastery over the realistic presentation of the form, which involved shape, colour, proportion and other elements contributing the deceptive appearance of the painting. According to Pliny, Parrhasios, who came from Ephesus, made an enormous contribution to painting: He was the first to introduce proportion, "to impart liveliness to the expression, elegance to the hair and beauty to the mouth". [28] Artists of the time conceded that he was unsurpassed in drawing outlines, the skill considered as the highest mark of refinement in painting. Pliny also reports that the accuracy of depicting the body and texture of surfaces within the outlines was doubtless a great achievement, in which many acquired fame. Yet the contours of the figures and the boundaries of the colouring were "rarely satisfactorily achieved in painting".[29]

In spite of the fact that the ancient world was rather applausive towards achieving excellence in artistic imitation, the absence of original paintings makes it hard if not

[25] Pliny, *Natural History*, (Healy 1991, 325).
[26] Pliny, *Natural History*, (Healy 1991, 333).
[27] Pliny, *Natural History*, (Healy 1991, 333).
[28] Pliny, *Natural History*, (Healy 1991, 330).
[29] Pliny, *Natural History*, (Healy 1991, 330).

impossible to appreciate properly the meaning of the old concept of life-likeness in painting. One can find it amusing that according to some sources, Myron's bronze sculpture of a cow attracted bulls for its excessive lifelikeness. [30] The admiration for life-likeness implies the prevalent view in ancient Greece that the quality of art was measured by the degree of accomplished likeness.

It is not a coincidence that ancient Greek philosophy showed special commitment to articulating the theory and meaning of art by considering it as a human quest for mimicking the real world. Even though Ancient Greece was the first to articulate a theory of art, the fact remains that it did not occur to the Greeks to find a specific word for art that would convey its modern *raison d'être*. Instead, the Greek word *techne* refers to art as a skill, a mastery over a technical execution of a desired plan. However, Plato's concern about the harmful potentials of mimetic presentation demonstrates the ancient view of art as more than a mere technical execution.

Modern Orthodox Scholarship undoubtedly owes much to the Platonic understanding of *mimesis*, while attributing the quest for naturalism to the pagan origins of Greek art. The contrast between the visible world and its authentic prototype also refers to the Platonic understanding of the visible world, which he sees as only a copy of the authentic reality. Plato introduced the idea of artistic presentation in terms of the prevalent view of the time: *mimesis* as an imitation and a replica of the visible world and thus twice removed from the original 'Form' that is invisible. The artist or an artisan for Plato imitates only phantasm and only produces the copy of a copy and not the truth itself. [31] Plato seems to be expecting an accurate historical account in the poetry of Homer and other poets and denounces the inaccuracy of their historical accounts. [32] Yet, at the same time he believes that, even a perfect imitation is nothing but a mere deception. He finds deception in the very act of transferring one's attention from the essence to its appearance. According to Plato's theory, an artist or a poet is expected to seek precision and perfection in his craft like a highly skilled technician but even in doing so all he can produce is only a pale copy of the object and nothing more. [33]

30 See Mattusch 1989, 144.
[31] Plato, *The Republic*, 598a
[32] Plato, *The Republic*, 599e.
[33] Plato, *The Republic*, 598a.

The famous allegory of the cave[34] illustrates Plato's views on the limitations of mimetic representation: people in the cave see shadows on the wall and not the reality itself, while the ability to see the truth is given to the few superior philosophers. In the book X of *the Republic* Socrates advances the story of the cave by comparing *mimesis* to a mirror. This comparison represents a craftsman as accomplishing nothing else but merely carrying around a mirror and passively reflecting what his own imperfect vision sees in it. Images according to Socrates reflect the real but have no essence of their own. Another analogy introduced by Socrates is his theory of forms: he speaks of three kinds of beds, the first is in nature – the idea of a bed produced by god;[35] the second is the material bed – made by an artisan; the third is an imitation of the existing bed painted by an artist. God's bed is the most real because it is the Form and a general concept. The craftsman's bed is removed from reality and the painted one is twice removed from the truth of the bed and therefore its aim is illusory deception and the desire to fool unsteady minds like those of children and the insane. Here Plato sharpens his distinction between the Form (meaning the idea or essence) and its material presentation. Anything that human beings make can only illustrate the idea that already exists; they cannot add anything to the existing truth even if they foolishly believe that they are creating something. The specific example of the bed suggests that Plato is in fact talking about the inspiration of an artist as the mind of god. "Bed", which is not part of nature but is destined to be created by human hands, first appears in the mind of God and only then is materialized by the craftsman.

Therefore, the example obviously suggests that Plato denies the existence of the artist's individual imagination independently from the mind of god. An artisan, in Plato's view may even claim to create the heavens and the earth, and even himself, but this power is an illusion, for the artist does not make the being he represents, he only reflects something that is like a being, but is not a being itself. Plato calls the eternal forms of things 'Ideas' and denies that they ever come into material existence but exist eternally and can be perceived by our reason and intellect. He justly admits that a visual representation does not 'clone' the object itself but only reproduces its visual appearance: "we can produce so many appearances, but assuredly not truly being things".[36]

[34] Plato, *The Republic*, 514a-520a.
[35] Plato, *The Republic*, 1991:279.
[36] Plato, *The Republic*, 595,e.

Anything that requires imagination and pretends to be something other than it is, in the Platonic view is a deceptive imitation and has an evidently negative meaning. An artist in Plato's thought has none of the qualities of a philosopher. He is inferior to a philosopher, among whom only a few have access to the truth itself. It is the rational thinking 'calculated and measured by the rational part of the soul'[37] that Plato sees as a way to truth. He gives a great priority to reason and argues "that part, which trusts measurement and calculation, must be the best part of the soul"[38] while art is only "a kind of play and not a serious business".[39] However, this 'unserious' play seems to be threatening his stance on morality and the safety of the Republic to such an extent that he is proposing to ban artists and poets from the Republic, and send them into exile. Plato never diminishes the power of art; on the contrary, he considers its deceptive nature immensely powerful and therefore dangerous for the well-being of the soul and ultimately of the republic.

Artistic imagination in Platonic thought is attributed to the senses and "it associates moreover with that part of us which is far removed from prudence, and is its mistress and friend for no healthy or true purpose".[40] Thus art is "the inferior mistress of an inferior friend, and the parent of an inferior progeny".[41] Plato attributes the guidance by the senses and emotions to a feminine nature associating it perhaps with sentimentalism, and opposes it to the rational ideals of masculinity: Emotions are womanish while to endure sorrow with calmness is manly.[42] Mimetic resemblance for Plato is not merely a mirror-like copy; he is also concerned with the damaging potentials that the use of the 'mirror' might generate.

All that Plato says about poetry can equally apply to any other forms of art, since in his dialogues he often brings up painting in the same context with poetry. All the arts are but a variety of poetry: "Everything that is responsible for creating something out of nothing is a kind of poetry; and so all the creations of every craft and profession are themselves a kind of poetry, and everyone who practices a craft is a poet".[43] Theatre for Plato is also mimetic since "these people witness the imitation of an affection, which …is far from being their

[37] Plato, *The Republic*, 602e.
[38] Plato, *The Republic*, 603a.
[39] Plato, *The Republic*, 602b.
[40] Plato, *The Republic*, 603a-b.
[41] Plato, *The Republic*, 603b.
[42] Plato, *The Republic*, 605e.
[43] Plato, *Symposium*, Diotima's speech, 205c.

own".[44] It has to be mentioned that Plato himself was a considerable literary artist. In the Symposium he demonstrates his amazing ability to reproduce many different forms of literary art. Gombrich noted that in spite of Plato's seeing mimetic representation as an inferior copy of another copy, his assessment of the fascinating power of copying the real and the capacity of paintings to deceive animals is frequently singled out as a "test of their excellence".[45] However, he is deeply convinced that this specific type of mastery is not enough for acquiring the access to the truth.

The ultimate reason why Plato seeks to banish artists and poets is precisely the emotional openness of art to the senses and its potential diversion from law and reason. He believes that admission of The Muse of lyric or epic poetry will cause further degradation of morality and safety: "pleasure and pain will have sovereign power in your city, instead of law and reason which is always thought in common to be best".[46] The freedom of imagination can appear as a threat to the discipline and propriety of the Republic. If all people give freedom to their own will the world will end up in chaos and anarchy. Plato's stress on the analogy between art and illusion suggests that mimesis divides the mind, setting the claims of the senses against reason. The contrasts between "undisciplined" Greek art with the "law-abiding" art of the Egyptians implies that he finds static and monotonous rhythm more useful for strengthening the order of the republic than the dynamism of the later artworks that also advanced the concept of realistic resemblance and encouraged the sense of freedom and unpredictability of motion and passions. Therefore, Plato gives credit to Egyptian art for its disciplinary order, unlike the imitative art of the Greeks giving freedom to the senses. The virtue of a Platonian citizen is not a sense-derived mimetic reflection of the truth but its rational and disciplined exploration.

Plato's positive reference to Egyptian art provides a reasonable support to his argument against the sensual nature of artistic expression. Plato, in fact lived in the time, when the tendency towards sensual expression started flourishing in classical Greek sculpture. The mysterious sense of stillness and the reserved emotionalism of Egyptian painting fascinated Plato who saw the propriety of such an art more suitable for safeguarding the strength and moral values of the society. Plato's fears over the sensual nature of his contemporary Greek

[44] Plato, *The Republic*, 604d.
[45] Gombrich 1973, 194.
[46] Plato, *The Republic*, 607a.

art obviously derived from the fact that the excess of emotional expression could easily challenge the safety of the republic.

Plato's doubts about the possible effects of artistic expression beg the question as to which art is he discussing in particular. Plato obviously addresses the social convention about artistic representation that expects art to copy the real world; he expresses his belief that it is not possible to imitate the invisible essence of objects by simply trying to depict their appearance. One of the problems in understanding Plato's attitude to art and painting in particular is that very little is preserved from ancient Greek paintings. Few Cretan painters reveal the splendid use of colour, which probably made it possible to imitate the outward appearance of things in fullness including their colour, shades and specific details. It would be rather naive to assume that neither Socrates nor Plato knew the value of art. It is also obvious that the meaning of art in their time differed significantly from the meaning it gained after the Renaissance. Gombrich rightly notes that Socrates could not possibly overlook the fact that art in his own time obviously showed signs of being concerned with something more than mere imitation. Reversing gradually the colour of black figures and terra backgrounds in vase painting can serve as one of the evidences[47] proving that the rationale of art is something else other than mere copying. Plato, like his master, sees art as a threat and refuses to point to its positive potentials fearing that the dangers can outweigh the benefits.

It is also likely that Plato is addressing the social and religious belief according to which the statues of gods were penetrated by divinity as their dwelling places – the idea that constitutes the fundamental point in idolatry. The fact that Plato rather overstates his reasonable argument that art cannot depict the essence of things, may be part of the social circumstances that required a special emphasis on clarifying the subject. Before Plato the Archaic statues of gods were understood not simply as illusionistic depictions of a deity but as an actual revelation of divinity that would otherwise be invisible. The conviction grew in Greek thought that a supreme art can even dispense entirely with the model perceived by the senses, that it can completely emancipate itself from the impression of that which is actually observed. The idea of an artwork being penetrated by the divinity of gods was certainly not an idea that either Plato would applaud or Christians would later.

[47] Gombrich 2007, 305-306.

In fact Plato's dialogue on mimesis in *The Republic* may not present his negative attitude to art itself as much as it reflects his political concerns. He is eager to secure the magnificence of the Republic through a regimental discipline, rational thinking and philosophy rather than art that touches the sensitive part of human soul and therefore can easily become a tool for destructive manipulations in the hands of evil powers.

The stories praising the mimetic skills of painters make a special point in referring to the unity of outward resemblance and inner expression, that makes the presentation convincing and truly life-like. According to Pliny the Greeks of the 4th Century BC were already aware of that mysterious element that turned the mere *techne* into a powerful conqueror of human minds. Apelles of Cos, who published the principles of painting, obtained Pliny's admiration as the one who "surpassed all the painters that preceded him and all who were to come after him. He singly contributed almost more to painting than all the other artists put together".[48] Pliny could not find his rival for his "graceful charm".[49] One of the Appelles's paintings particularly fascinated Pliny the elder: "Hanging among the outstanding masterpieces by many artists it looked blank. For this reason it attracted notice and was more celebrated than any other work on display".[50] Pliny's description of the picture as 'blank' certainly creates a puzzle today since he also reports that Appelles was so highly skilled in realistic depiction that the physiognomists could tell the person's fortune by looking at the portraits painted by him.[51] The historians seem to be applauding a highly skilled realist portrait painter for painting the picture that captivated peoples' eyes by looking 'blank' or 'faded' comparing with other paintings. We are also told by Pliny that Aristides of Thebes of the 4th century BC was the first painter to portray the mind and express the personality of a human being, what the Greeks call *ethos*. He saw the expression and emotions more important than mere imitation[52].

One of the reasons why Plato is not discussing sculpture as mimetic may well be that the sculpture is obviously three dimensional and no optical illusion of space is required for making it look as if it were three dimensional. The reason why Plato apparently views painting as more susceptible than sculpture to mimetic resemblance may be the fact that it

[48] Pliny, *Natural History*, (Healy 1991, 331).
[49] Ibid.
[50] Pliny, *Natural History*, (Healy 1991, 332).
[51] Ibid.
[52] Pliny, *Natural History*, (Healy 1991, 334).

involves colour and therefore is open to illusionistic effects. Yet, it has to be mentioned that there is a substantial evidence that archaic Greek statues particularly those of Kouros and Kore, were in fact painted in colour. However, the use of Gold gradually took over in the Greek sculpture of later periods. The discussion on Greek art can be illustrated more readily in terms of sculpture, the remains of which are more accessible in the museums all over the world.

The mastery of technical execution in the classical period was tested by the degree of life-likeness, although the main stress was made on the proportions of The Golden Section as much as the element of recognisability and emotional expression. The ideal use of proportions implied to the increase of naturalism: The proportion that was used by Euclid the mathematician was the Golden Mean, or the Golden Section. The idea of symmetry is replaced in the classical period by the idea of balance. Artists of the classical period were not satisfied with harmonizing proportions only and started seeing life likeness in motion, in natural postures that grew more stylized in the Hellenistic period.

The concern for naturalistic presentation in ancient Greek sculpture significantly increased and refined in the classical period (510BC-323BC), starting from its early stage, which historically corresponds to the time when Plato lived and developed his thought (424-423BC – 348-347BC). Plato's unhappiness with the mimetic concern of art might also be caused by the changes in art after the archaic period to which Plato could be more sympathetic for its tendency to stillness and sobriety and its resemblance to Egyptian sculpture. As one scholar rightly described the High Classical period, it stands as "not remote and neutral like the Archaic, but rather, like the Early Classical era, simultaneously proud and vulnerable".[53] Emotional expression reached its peak in the Hellenistic period and eventually ended in stylized and rather mannerist and sentimental expression loaded with detailed description of the textures of surfaces and overstated emotionalism.

The sculpture of Plato's time shows us the transition in art from the archaic period to the classical. Archaic symmetry and schematic strictness in the organization of a bodily structure created an element of static permanence and rigidity in movement and emotional expression. The classical sculptors started positioning limbs and body parts more freely and choosing more relaxed positions that made them look more convincing and more life-like.

[53] Pollitt 1972, 48.

The element of naturalism rose together with the increase of freedom in the movement of bodies and with an interest in the individual character. The transition from the archaic period to classical sculpture is marked with the search for artistic solutions to the problem of the spatial organization of sculpture, moving from archaic symbolic and rigid forms to more life-like, natural and dynamic appearances. An archaic sculpture is meant for frontal viewing – the most representational part is located in the front of the sculpture. The round sculpture started directing the viewer to its other sides apart from the front. The progress of illusory precision is found in refinement of the illusion of space through shaping three dimensional objects and details more and more carefully. However, for Plato this tendency does represent progress, but perhaps even a regress.

Ancient Greek psychology recognized two forces at the root of human emotional expression – *ethos*, a man's 'character' as formed by inheritance, habit and self-discipline, and *pathos*, his spontaneous reaction to experiences in the external world. In the 4th Century BC Greek writers and artists began to display and articulate an active interest in just what role these two aspects of human expression should play in the arts.[54]

The fusion of ethos and pathos took place in classical Greek sculpture in the most highly developed form. The artists started looking for more immediate impressions of motion than the ones that needed rational and systematic analyses. Rhythmos was one of the essential elements that served this task. The basic meaning of the word was 'shape' or 'pattern'.[55] The word rhythmos associates nowadays more readily with music, where it denotes temporal rhythms and their relation to the beat or pulse while representing in the visual arts a concept of repetitive accents not alien to Egyptian or archaic sculpture or even prehistoric paintings. However, in classical Greece the notion of rhythm moved from the inner realm to the outer musicality of forms, their movements and the folds of drapery. The crucial difference between the archaic stability and classical dynamism expressed through the classical fusion between ethos and pathos. "Just as *symmetria* gave rational order to form, *rhythmos*, gave rational order to motion".[56]

[54] Pollitt 1972, 43-44.
[55] Pollitt 1972, 56.
[56] Pollitt 1972, 58.

It can be argued that in Plato's times the initiative to make the sculpture rounded was manifest almost shockingly when Myron made his famous Discobolus.[57] Myron's athlete is shown in movement, in the climaxing moment when he is about to throw the disc. The choice of one particular, the most dramatic moment in his movement brings in the sense of dynamism of the climax of tension. The proportions of the body are more life-like and the surface of the body also looks more realistic with its glimmering of shades and light. His body is rotating rather dramatically compared with the archaic, rather static sculptures.[58] The static figure suddenly started moving into space, though it still gives the impression that the different parts of the body are organized like the cameo-like layers of flat surfaces one behind the other.

Myron clearly showed that the more 'mimetic' the artwork is, the more complications it involves. It is not only the shapes of forms that are being imitated but also a movement that imitates the liveliness of the figure rather than just it's appearance and likeness. In Myron's sculpture it is the might of a human athlete that is supposed to be praised, which the sculptor achieves by pausing and thus eternalizing the peak of his movement. This pausing of the highest point itself refers to the artistic interest in the dynamics of life, emotion, the representation of which is no longer intended for frontal viewing as with the Egyptians. The beauty of life in classical Greece is complicated, dynamic, tense, yet powerful and rich with motion and energy.

3.3. Three ancient philosophers on mimesis

Aristotle evaluated Plato's discussion on mimesis in a more positive direction. Whereas Plato tended to respond to the social convention that art is copying the truth, Aristotle took a step further in discerning that copying is not the goal of art but it must be concerned with something beyond the visual representation. Plato sees art as rivalling unsuccessfully with the sciences, while Aristotle gives it the role of elevating rather than exploring or studying. Aristotle made a clear distinction between a historian and a poet and unlike Plato, he believed that "The poet's function is to describe not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen".[59] Therefore, Aristotle points to the imagination as the chief

[57] Illustration №22.
[58] Illustration №23.
[59] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 9, 1451b.

agent in creating a possibility as something other than a copy. Accordingly, poetry is 'more philosophical' than history.

Mimesis is defined not by its reproduction of the real but by its ability to reveal universal truths in particular characters and actions. While Plato regards the poet's divergence from facts as a key failure, Aristotle regards it as part of the poet's most expressive power. Aristotle basically speaks of the form of tragedy in theatre, however, he applies the same principle to painting and other visual arts.[60] Even though poetry is a key in any kind of art for Aristotle, he rightly notes that many works use the same media as poetry does, but it does not automatically turn them into poems. The chief agent is imagination that makes the poet.[61] Aristotle is quite aware of the fact that artistic imitation of the real does not copy the object with its imperfections, but instead tries to represent the object in a more beautiful way than it really is and sets a positive goal as its end. Thus he is encouraging idealization as a way of introducing poetry in the arts. The portrait painters "reproduce the distinctive features of a man, and at the same time, without losing the likeness, make him handsomer than he is".[62]

The debates between Plato's and Aristotle's thoughts on art have to be considered in the light of the Greek society's conventions where rationality, bravery and morality appeared as the chief virtues of a citizen. However, Plato and Aristotle seem to understand the same virtues in different ways. Aristotle identifies two essential tragic emotions: fear (phobos) and sadness over the misfortune of a man like ourselves.[63] Aristotle unlike Plato, emphasizes the rationality of mimesis and places the emphasis on the plot of the tragedy; the moral message has to come through the plot first of all and all the artistic methods of conveying it have to serve the same purpose. He divides the composition of a tragedy in two parts: Complication when the story develops and *dénouement*, resolution, when things start revealing or disclose.[64] The end culminates in a retrospection of *catharsis* (purgation).

Aristotle unlike Plato refers to mimesis as an attempt to express the invisible rather than to copy the external form. Aristotle pointed out that rather than being a mere imitator, the

[60] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 25. 1460b.
[61] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1951:9.
[62] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 15, 1454b.
[63] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1951:45.
[64] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 18, 1456a.

artist is a maker, a craftsperson and the making of art is *poiesis* rather than *techne*. The two views differ essentially on the mission of art: Plato presented art as *techne*, as a way to imitate and copy the existing object and denied its access to the truth, while *poiesis* for Aristotle has the function of elevating one's soul to the level of general truth. Plato feared that no artist could add anything to the created world, while Aristotle suggests that an artist can produce a work that will purify our inner self and make us better persons, which seems to be a significant addition to the real world.

The most significant difference between the ideas of Plato and his disciple Aristotle appears to be in the fact that Plato sets a particular goal for art and then unveils its failure in arriving at the truth unlike the art of rational thinking and calculation. Aristotle, on the other hand, is inclined to see the unique, positive end that art can achieve more successfully than any other disciplines. Aristotle initiates the view that art is potentially superior to calculation and rational thinking, with the implication that the purification of the senses it may afford has a greater value for the human soul than strict discipline or rationality.

The dialogue between Plato and Aristotle is still as much alive among modern Orthodox Christians as it was in the time of the Byzantine iconoclast controversy. One side looks through the Platonic perspective and fears that mimetic art can only lead to deception and harmful illusion. Whereas other believers lean towards a more Aristotelian view, and attempt to translate his thought into Christian terms. One approach of the latter group is to suggest that true and genuine art does not aim to depict the divine, and its sole purposes are the purification of the senses and the cultivation of Christian sensibility.

The discussion on art was significantly broadened in the 3rd century by Plotinus. He was the first to articulate that version of the meaning of mimetic presentation which was unconsciously felt by the artists of earlier times. Plotinus, unlike the earlier philosophers, introduced the vision of art as not only an imitation of the objects of the world but also as embodying the power of penetrating the principles that lay in the core of the nature of things.

According to Plotinus artworks do not merely imitate the visual appearance of material objects, but they raise them to their mental essences (*logoi*), which fill the whole of nature. He emphasised that the main objective of the arts such as music, poetry, painting, sculpture

and architecture is the contemplation of beauty. He took a step further from Aristotle's suggestion about the selectiveness of artistic presentation of only the most beautiful yet essential features; he clarified that artistic longing is a desire to grasp the most ideal visual images or sounds, which present the ultimately beautiful ideas, "*eidoi*" of subjects. Plotinus even systematized certain rules for successfully executing this task. He saw a need to present objects as seen on a closer look under bright light, using the primary colours, without any linear distortions, avoiding shadows and the depiction of depth.[65] The Intellectual-Principle according to Plotinus stands as the image of The One: "that there be something in its likeness as the sun's rays tell of the sun".[66] Yet The One itself is not an Intellectual-Principle, rather, "any perception of the external indicates either sensation or intellection, sensation symbolized by a line and intellection by a circle…"[67] In Plotinus' view, only through the means of perception can the depiction reveal the inner form of things. The form of an object refers to its *idea*, essence. The beauty of represented objects is not seen in their appearance but in their character, in their inner self, in the core of their being. The beauty of art according to Plotinus is one of the ways of man's return from this imperfect world to the absolute world of *ideas*. After several centuries, this approach was further developed in Byzantine art in the phenomenon of the icon, and his ideas were employed for the foundation of the aesthetics and theology of the icon.

The ultimate value of Plotinus' analysis of artistic presentation is precisely in the fact that he connected the phenomenon of art with its primordial source, with its origin and significance. Art for Plotinus, unlike Plato, is not only a human amusement nor does it merely serve our improvement as Aristotle thought, but it has its origin in the inherent search for the transcendent. In Plotinus' conception of the arts, they do not simply imitate the visible, but "run back upwards to the *logoi*, the principles from which nature derives; then, also they create many things, by themselves, and, as they have beauty, they add it to what stands in need of it".[68] The Plotinian sense of the *eidos* presents the "idea that shines through" and awakens the Eros for the infinite.[69] The visible objects in artistic representation are no longer seen as mirror-like reflections but they add to God's creation;

[65] Plotinus, 5,7 a,b.
[66] Plotinus, 5,7 a.
[67] Plotinus, 5,7 a,b.
[68] Plotinus, Quoted by Dronke 2003, 12.
[69] Plotinus, 3, 101 a,b, 2, 37a

they are additional creations contributing to the process of an eternal adornment of the world.

The creative interpretation of art directed the special attention of Christian thinkers to the philosophy of Plotinus. These ideas were rethought later in the concept of *logoi* by St Maximus the Confessor and even later in the 20th century by the neo-Orthodox aesthetics and in particular by Bulgakov in his principle of the Sophianism of art. It is not a coincidence that the old and modern Orthodox thinkers perceived the need for exploring the authentic meaning of material objects than merely seeing them as illusionary reflections inferior to their authentic yet distant archetypes, as Plato suggested. Plotinus's acceptance of artistic reference to that higher sphere at least indirectly,[70] through the Reason-Principle, corresponds to the Orthodox way of mutual relationship with God allowing the potentiality for ascending to God through matter, while for Plato the truth descends only by the grace of God upon the few chosen philosophers. The Plotinian view therefore is more in agreement with the Orthodox concept of matter as the embodiment of its soul and its wholeness. This concept can only refer in the context of art to the expression of the inner meaning of the depiction rather than merely pretending to be depicting the *Idea* itself.

3.4. The role and appreciations of life-likeness in early Christian art

The concept of mimetic presentation in Christian art has been controversial and debated since Christianity emerged. The Christian interest towards mimetic presentation and yet its simultaneous rejection of it is inseparable from the social and historical context in which Christianity emerged. The socio-political reality of the time offered a rather harsh environment to art in which it could not flourish and prosper by simply continuing the legacy of previous artistic schools and masters. New faith required a new style and a new manner that would celebrate the light of Christ appropriately. With the persecution coming from Roman paganism on one side and the prohibitions of making images from the Jewish law on the other, the early Christians did not exactly inhabit an ideal environment in which they could celebrate the newly embraced faith with artistic grandeur and magnificence.

The new concept of the Incarnation never prevented Christians from employing and sanctifying the material and cultural legacy of pagan antiquity. The new challenge of a Christian artisan was to find a way of employing the traditional form and to imbue it with a

[70] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5, 11a.

new meaning. It is sufficient to mention that Christian architecture derived from pagan temples and only later obtained the new forms more relevant to liturgical practice. Gradual conversion to Christianity pointed towards the need for sanctification and transformation of the existing reality rather than its destruction. The creative use of the past allowed the first Christians to cleanse the pagan content of their cultural tradition and transform it through the light of Christ.

The Christian tendency towards transforming and sanctifying the legacy of Greaco-Roman antiquity by no means relaxed the Old Testament prohibitions on artistic presentation. The Old testament warning created a disquiet in the minds of many Christians: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth".[71] The skill for making an image look life-like carried a chief responsibility for breaking the Law in Jewish culture: "The more lifelike they were, the more they sinned against the commandment forbidding images".[72] However, the well-known painting from the Synagogue in Dura Europos dated by the 3rd Century AD presents the scenes of the Old Testament in a very naturalistic manner.[73] Some scholars consider that the paintings were accomplished in order to compete with many other religions practiced in Dura-Europos, especially with the new Christian Church that appears to have opened shortly before the surviving paintings were begun in the synagogue. The common view allows a possibility that the paintings might have simply had an educational function to instruct and teach the history and laws of the religion.

When we speak of early Christian art we mainly refer to the earliest known artworks that reached our times created in the Roman Empire within a funereal context. The early Christian art is Roman in style and Christian in subject. Even an amateur eye can easily grasp the stylistic similarity between the catacomb paintings of Christians and the painted houses of the Roman nobility in Pompeii or Herculaneum.[74] The most obvious similarity is however, found not in frescos as much as between the funeral panel portraits discovered in

[71] Exodus 20:4,5.
[72] Gombrich 2007, 127.
[73] Illusrtration №24.
[74] Illustration №25.

the Fayum Oasis[75] and the panel paintings of Christ and the saints made by Christians which later became known as icons and played an essential part in Christian worship.

The view that funerary portraits, discovered in the oasis of Fayum in Egypt, are the predecessors of Christian iconography[76] is often disputed among the modern Orthodox Scholars for it presents the likeness of dead individuals rather than the saints enlightened by the light of Christ.[77] It is true that the specific function of Fayum portraits were the remembrance of the dead and not a veneration of their sanctity.[78] However, looking at the funerary portraits of Egypt one can hardly deny their resemblance with the earliest extant icons of the 6th Century such as the icon of Christ of St Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai.[79] Christian iconographers of later generations obviously borrowed the artistic manner of depiction from the masters of Fayum.[80] The highly realistic expression of mummy portraits bears a resemblance with Roman frescos, the realism of which is not scrupulous but it merges with almost an impressionistic style. This highly impressionistic style appealed to the eyes of early Christians as much as it persuaded the perception of pagan Romans.

It is surely not a coincidence that the portraits claiming to be the predecessors of icons made their appearance in Roman Egypt. The funerary portraits present a certain combination of a Roman desire to portray the individual character naturalistically and the Egyptian preference for generalizing and portraying things with the overtone of the eternal and mysterious realm. The fusion must have produced a sense of sacramentality at the verge of two realms – the earthly and the transcendental. The element of wonder and unpredictability in the funerary portraits unites with the credibility of the likeness of their prototypes.

Death, burial and tomb most likely provided a mysterious zone where the image of the dead person communicated this world with the world of eternity through the image of the departed person. Therefore, the material object became a sign, a symbol of somebody's

[75] Illustration №26.
[76] Dated by the time of Roman Egypt from the 1st c BC to the middle of the 3rd c AD.
[77] Jazikova 1995, 11.
[78] Cormack 2000, 67.
[79] Illustration №27.
[80] Illustration №28.

presence while the person was no longer physically present and created a sense of mystery and wonder.

The technical similarities between the Fayum portraits and icons include the use of encaustic technique, focus on the face and a special stylisation of certain features, especially the eyes, which are staring not directly at the observer but towards the space beyond. The artist places the eyeballs not in the centre but slightly pushes them aside. The space left between the eyeballs and the lower contour of the eye creates an impression as if there is no concrete target of concentration in the look but the gaze is directed towards the infinity beyond us.

The artistic tricks and elements employed by the painters of Fayum portraits are pre-empting the principles of iconography, which obtained a symbolic and theological meaning later and introduced a perfect way of embracing and celebrating the life eternal through the materialized medium of the Incarnate. Grabar noted that "Just as in the burial grounds, the images were intended to do more than recall events of the past: they were intended in some sense to perpetuate the intervention of God, as seen in these instances, for the benefit of the neophytes, just as the sacraments did".[81] The inspiration drawn from the mummy portraits can be discerned not only in the iconographic technique of painting but also in the very idea of immortalizing the image of a person who passed the boundary of the temporary world and inhabited the eternal realm. The function of these portraits was obviously different from that of the portraits of Roman emperors, which aimed at glorifying their magnificence. Yet, if the Roman Egyptians desired to immortalize the images of their dead regardless of their status and social standing, in Christianity picturing one's face eventually became a special award for sanctity. Christians immortalized the faces of only those who passed beyond the dividing point through the light of Christ and left behind a special example of a holy life or martyrdom. The very object of veneration in icons became not the persons of saints but their eternal union with Christ. The distinct feature of iconography since its early days consisted precisely in visualizing the bridge between two worlds with a special reference to Christ.

[81] Grabar 1980, 21.

3.5. A puritanical approach to artistic presence in the early Church

An apocryphal story can illustrate the uncertainty that the first Christians experienced in their relation to artistic expression outside the frames of iconography. The apocryphal acts of St John tell us that John had a disciple Lycomedes who commissioned a painter to paint the image of his master. He had the portrait kept in his cell decorated and crowned with flowers. Wondering why the disciple kept isolating himself from the rest of the brethren, John enquired the reason. Finally Lycomedes showed him the portrait and St John was not pleased. He exclaimed that the only true painter of our images is God, the one who knows: "the shapes and appearances and postures and types of our souls".[82] The painting, he saw in his disciple's cell, he condemned as "childish and imperfect: thou hast drawn a dead likeness of the dead".[83] However, the context of the story reveals that the objection applied to the possible attempt at idolising the human master, resulting in the urge to having an artistic image of his face. The other objection could of course be the fact that possessing the image became the reason of his withdrawal from the brethren and his distraction from the Christian community. This story may be intended to illustrate the dangers of misusing artistic appreciation in an ascetic context, rather than to condemn artistic presentation *per se*.

Looking at the remains of the Imperial palace in Constantinople, one may observe that creativity, imagination and realism, acquired more freedom in secular art in Byzantium than it did in liturgical. Artistic eloquence borrowed from the pagan art of late antiquity was popular at the Imperial court. Inventiveness was also somehow associated with the lack of discipline. The imperial court had the right to initiate the subject for painting instead of an artist who was merely an executor of the order. The artist was still very much a technician who had to be told what to do.

From the Fifth Century onwards there is a noticeable trend by Christian iconographers to reinforce and to codify in their images the basic dogmas of the Christian faith. The peaceful, pastoral images of the Good Shepherd ministering to his small Christian flock and other allegories popular in late antiquity started to get marginalized in church decoration and in manuscripts in the 5th and 6th centuries. The reason for these changes was perhaps the desire amongst the Christian faithful to interpret the decorative motifs of late antiquity

[82] Grabar 1980, 67.
[83] Ibid.

in an allegorical manner that could link them to the Scripture. Yet by the seventh century, the theme of the Good Shepherd has disappeared entirely and been replaced by a new type of hieratic image. The Allegory of birds as the souls resting in heaven with the vines referring to God's rule over all living things had to be changed to something more substantial and straightforward. The reference was to be made to a symbolic composition that is easy to read and identify.

Grabar observes that in the seventh century the Byzantine Greeks renounced allegory in their worship precisely because of this: "the shadow of truth, as they said (referring to allegories and to events of the Old Testament), is never as useful as the truth itself, that is to say the events following the Incarnation".[84] The Quinisext council of Trullo declared in 692 AD: "Thou shalt not paint a lamb for the type of Christ, but himself".[85] The council explained: "Embracing therefore the ancient types and shadows as symbols of the truth, and patterns given to the Church, we prefer "grace and truth," receiving it as the fulfilment of the Law".[86] The underlining theological rationale for the prohibition should have been the very fact that Christ became human, he became man and therefore should be venerated in the form in which he has been revealed to the world. The canon is often misunderstood as a prohibition or a restriction applied to iconographers, while in fact it encourages human imagination towards employing even more naturalistic imagery in iconography. Instead of simply depicting an impersonal lamb, one needs to depict the human image of Christ inspiring infinite love and forgiveness that certainly requires exquisite imagination and artistic skill as well as theological knowledge acquired through prayerful contemplation.

The church rejected the shadow of truth in terms of allegory as long as allegory failed to express fully the theological meaning of Christ-God, who became a man for the salvation of all. The fathers, in fact, considered the idea of the 'shadow' as rather intertwined with its own source. St Theodore the Studite compares the inseparability of the image from the prototype to the body and its shadow: "From the simultaneous existence of both it follows that when Christ is seen, then His image is also potentially seen, and consequently is transferred by imprint into a material whatever".[87] The fathers agree that the image stands

[84] Grabar 1980, 54.
[85] Canon 82, Quinisext Council.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Theodore of Studios, (Roth 1997, 109).

for its prototype even though it is a symbol or a shadow of him and not him as such. Yet the shadow cannot fall without the presence of its cause. St Theodore insists: "when anyone is portrayed, it is not the nature but the hypostasis, which is portrayed. For how could a nature be portrayed unless it were contemplated in a hypostasis".[88] Allegory, however, is not even always the shadow, but a distant reference to it and has a more intellectual character than symbolic and expressive.

3.6. The positive outcomes of Byzantine Iconoclasm in the formation of the Church's understanding of mimetic presentation

It is remarkable that the Orthodox Church, which boasts having a special place for artistic creativity in its worship, had to secure its place through enormous struggle, toils, and even with the blood of martyrs. Two waves of iconoclasm enforced in Byzantium were preceded by political instability and tension between the state and the Church.[89] The Old Testament prohibitions came up again on the surface of Christian consciousness later in Byzantium and the disagreement over incorporating images into Christian worship eventually led to the final phase of iconoclastic controversy in the 8-9th centuries. Iconoclasm deeply wounded the Christian empire as well as it also obliged the Church to articulate the theological meaning and importance of including art in its worship. In 726 (or 730)[90] iconoclasm was imposed as the official doctrine of the empire and remained in force until 780. The second time it revived in 814 and lasted until 842.

The points made by iconoclasts echo, consciously or otherwise, the Platonic views on mimesis in art combined with the Jewish law on the prohibition of images. The Byzantine "prohibitors" of images were concerned not solely with the use of art outside the church, or with its inclusion of inferior, earthly elements, but they fought vigorously against the idea of granting to artistic expression a theological meaning and power. Iconoclasts took a rather extreme turn within the frames of Platonic perception and argued against the veneration of icons on the grounds that by venerating icons the Christians were venerating the fallen matter, which, they believed, equalled idolatry. It is likely that the iconoclasts saw the use of icons as an explicit danger of falling into idolatry and therefore they intended to guard their faith from the harm of such idolatry.

[88] Theodore of Studios, (Roth 1997, 90).
[89] The second phase of iconoclasm is discussed in length by Louth 2007, 119-130.
[90] The exact date of the promulgation of the first iconoclastic edict is in doubt. See Mango 1986, 149.

The iconodules had to spend a great deal of energy over some centuries proving that the icons were far from being the 'graven images', which they would worship and serve instead of the Creator. Instead, they argued the images manifested the invisible presence of Christ and his saints. The veneration given to the image would go to its prototype that was the Christ in his saints: "The honour given to the image passes to the archetype"[91] proposed St John of Damascus. He articulated the chief theological meaning of iconography, stating that the image is not worshipped, but it is venerated as a visual manifestation of the person who is depicted. The image is not Christ himself but it is His image, His face and therefore it stands for as a sign and experience of His invisible presence. St John is not particularly concerned with the visual likeness between the image and an archetype but he considers the subject in an ontological context.

St Theodore of Studios appears to be even more explicit in signifying the visual resemblance as an essential feature of iconography: "Veneration is given to the image not insofar as it falls short of similarity, but insofar as it resembles the similarity… In spite of such great differences, there is one veneration of the symbol and the prototype; so evidently the same likeness is recognized in both".[92] According to Theodore the Studite "it is not the nature but the hypostasis, which is portrayed. For how could a nature be portrayed unless it were contemplated in a hypostasis".[93] 'Material' is obviously not a synonym for the fallen, sick and illusory sphere for the fathers of the church who took up the responsibility of explaining the value of artistic involvement in Christian worship.

The apologists of the veneration of icons such as St John of Damascus and his later follower St Theodore the Studite based their theology of icons precisely on the doctrine of the incarnation and saw the very idea of artistic expression as inseparable from the dogma of the Incarnation. The notion of the separation between the two worlds concerned the Christian thought starting from the story of the Fall and culminating in the idea of the world that rejected and crucified the Christ God himself: "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not".[94] Orthodox asceticism considers any kind of attachment to the material world as an obstacle in the process of *Theosis* or deification

[91] St Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, quoted by John of Damascus, (Louth 2003, 35).
t[92] Theodore of Studios 1997, 104.
[93] Theodore of Studios 1997, 90.
[94] John 1.10.

leading towards embracing the life eternal in Christ. Orthodox Christianity does not reject the world but rather regards the present world as only a passing stage embraced by the bigger picture of eternity. The Christian understanding of matter is revealed in fullness in the doctrine of the Incarnation. God became matter in order to sanctify the world and deify human nature, to imbue it with the lost likeness of God. Nobody can be saved without being born in the flesh first. The harmony and balance between material and spiritual is the essential point in Orthodox spirituality: attachment to the body is as unacceptable as the denial of the body and relying only on the immaterial realm.

The ancient concept of the world is still prevalent for Christians as a pale copy of the truth where we see the truth as "in a mirror darkly".[95] Yet the creativity of Christian thought found a way of employing the 'mirror' to access the truth, because, after all, human vision is limited to seeing the world through this 'mirror'. Prayerful contemplation may be considered as the nearest associate to the Platonic idea of direct access to the truth, but Christianity humbly admits that even the tremendous ascetic practice of prayerful contemplation cannot defeat completely the limitations of human nature. According to St Gregory of Nazianzus, even the noblest theologian is not the one who has discovered the whole, for "our earthly shackles do not permit us to the whole – but one whose mental image is by comparison fuller, who has gathered in his mind a richer picture, outline, or whatever we call it, of the truth".[96] The richer picture for a patristic mind obviously included the possibility of employing visual imagery in the worship of the Incarnate God.

3.7. Byzantine admiration of life-likeness in artistic presentation

Negative thoughts and doubts expressed about mimetic presentation by iconoclasts were confronted by affirmative appreciations of artistic presentation in Byzantium. The emperor Leo VI described the scenes depicted in the Church founded by Stylianos Zaoutzes, as so realistic that he believes the depictions of flowers could attract bees if they entered the building.[97] The use of *opus sectile* technique in the mentioned works might suggest that the emperor was fascinated by the achieved likeness within the frames offered by the particular technique. Henry Maguire argues that Leo was talking not about mimetic illusionism and

[95] 1 Corinthians 13:12.
[96] Gregory of Nazianzus, *4th Or.* XVII, (Williams 2002).
[97] Maguire 2007, 106.

precise descriptions, but tried to convey the conceptions of speech, an impression or an idea.[98]

Yet, the Christians must have inherited the respect for life-likeness in art from their ancient ancestors. Byzantium, especially in the times of Justinian, valued the artistic profession rather highly and encouraged professionalism in that field. Cyril Mango reports from historical sources that the prevailing view of Byzantine authors is that their art was highly true to nature: "The work of painters was praised for being lifelike: images are all but devoid of breath, they are suffused with natural colour, they are on the point of opening their lips in speech".[99] The 8th century painter, who painted a Portrait of Philippicus Bardanes was "greatly praised by other painters because the emperor's likeness did not depart from its archetype".[100] Angelus XXVII, De Maximiano thought that the embroidered altar cloth with the images of birds and beasts that are represented on it could be described only by saying that they are "alive in the flesh".[101] Asterius of Amaseia praised the painter of the martyrdom of St Euphemia in the 4th century, claiming that the impressions he received 'captivated him entirely'. The artist, in his view, "raised painting to such great heights by making pictures that were all but alive".[102] The well educated bishop wisely discerned that art does not merely copy a form but it can also communicate emotions and feelings, it "can convey the semblance of wrath even by means of inanimate matter".[103]

Choricius speaks about the Church of St Stephen in Gaza and describes the painted wall[104] which has everything the sea brings forth and all the tribute of the earth: "there is hardly anything you could look for that is not included, and a great deal that you would not expect to see".[105] He exclaims in excitement: "How faithful to nature is this art! What splendid, what charming execution! This rich adornment befits a sanctuary of such golden opulence".[106] However, Choricius like Asterius of Amaseia valued the the art of conveying a movement and character above mere mimetic presentation. He believes that the art of

[98] Ibid.
[99] Mango 1986, xv.
[100] John of Ephesus, Parast. Syntomoi chronikai 53, Mango 1986, 133.
[101] Agnellus XXVII, De Maximiano c. 80. Mango 1986, 107.
[102] Asterius of Amaseia, Mango 1986, 38.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Polansky thinks that in spite of mention of the 'wall' the talk must be about the floor mosaic located along the east wall of the atrium, "The Nilotic Mosaic in Saint Stephen's Church of Gaza in Choricius Description", Polansky 2009, 171.
[105] Choricius, Laudatio Marciani I, Mango 1986, 69.
[106] Ibid.

painting "is more valuable than the other arts because it imitates nature and strives to produce creations that are animate (*empsucha*)".[107] In spite of their tendency to treat art as *techne*, The Byzantines were aware of the expressive power of painting, which required a great mastery of technical execution. Mango rightly points out that "The Orthodox were clearly on more solid ground when they argued that an image was a symbol (*typos*) which, by reason of resemblance, reproduced the 'person' (*prosôpon*), but not the substance (*ousia* or *hypostasis*) of the model".[108] Apart from the fact that divinity was not going to be depicted, the inner content of the presentation was also to be discerned in expression, which could only come in a form of augmentation after looking at the visual depiction.

3.8.Art as a form of rhetoric and an object of ekphrasis in Byzantium

A later Byzantine astronomer and historian Nicephorus Gregoras,[109] while comparing the techniques used by painters and astronomers, emphasized an important point, which presented the art of painting as a combination of both *techne* and poetry. He discerned that the painters imitate objects not according to their true properties, but they try to make them recognizable to the viewers within the capabilities of human nature. They show the depicted objects and "think them down" according to the artistic requirements so "as to make them visually more plausible".[110] He maintains that art reaches the power of rhetoric precisely through an exquisite technical execution. A good master is likely to deserve more applauds and exercise more power over the faithful through the mastery of visual presentation.

The artistic skill of illustrating the story with emotional power was highly praised by the fathers of the early church. St Gregory of Nyssa claimed that "the painter, too, has spread out the blooms of his art …"[111] having depicted in the image the most expressive features and moments from the martyrdom in order to reach a special power of influence and affirm the emotional credibility of the story. He wisely discerned that all of these were "wrought by means of colours as if it were a book that uttered speech, and so he both represented the martyr's feats with all clarity and adorned the church like a beautiful meadow".[112] St

[107] Choricius Laudatio Marciani I, Mango 1986, 64.
[108] Mango 1986, 150.
[109] 1295-1360.
[110] Nicephorus Gregoras, quoted by Mango 1986, 254.
[111] Gregory of Nyssa, *Dedeitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti:* Mango 1986, 37.
[112] Ibid.

Gregory regards painting as a more powerful phenomenon than simply a visual depiction on the wall: "for painting, even if it is silent, is capable of speaking from the wall and being of the greatest benefit".[113]

There is also a remarkable homily of St Basil, in which he calls painters to use their artistic skills and imagination for celebrating the martyrdom of Barlaam. He exclaims: "Arise now, o splendid painters of the feats of martyrs! Magnify with your art the general mutilated appearance (eikon). Adorn with your cunning colours the crowned Athlete whom I have but dimly described". [114] St Basil gives the artists very specific and concrete tasks regarding what to depict in order to "let the demons weep... Let the burnt yet victorious hand be shown to them once again".[115] The oratorical sermon of this church father reveals his own exquisite manner of speaking artistically: "May I behold the struggle between the hand and the fire, depicted more accurately by you [than I have done]; may I behold the Wrestler, as he is represented more splendidly on your image".[116] Apart from his eloquence and splendid imagination, the emotional power of his speech derives from the common practice of *ekphrasis* while he claims he cannot compete with the depictions of a painter, yet his elaborate manner of speaking demonstrates the magnificence of rhetoric.

These cases demonstrating the patristic fascination with the power of artistic expression and its potentials reveal that painting was not merely an illustration of a book, which needs to be read in literary terms but the fathers obviously affirm its address to sense perception and approve its sensual involvement in Christian worship.

3.9. Anti-Latin attitude in Byzantium – the antecedent of the modern Orthodox protest against western art

The modern Orthodox condemnations of western art apparently have their origins in post-iconoclastic Byzantium, in the times when Latin elements started showing clear signs of parting with the traditional iconography. Even after the triumph of Orthodoxy, when the church declared its art to be an illustration of the doctrine of the Incarnation, the subject of mimetic presentation still caused a certain disagreement between Christians. The extreme

[113] Ibid.
[114] Basil, *Homilia XVII,* In Barlaam martytem, Mango 1986, 37.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

ascetic view had a more puritanical approach and saw the visual resemblance as a distraction that could direct the praying person's mind from heavenly to earthly things.

Centuries later after the triumph of Orthodoxy, the Orthodox Church saw another threat coming from the Latin 'renegades' who encouraged earthly elements in their paintings. Acquaintance with western art must have been a fact of everyday occurrence in the Palaiologian period, and it produced a twofold reaction. The Greeks developed a type of mannerist painting in the time of the reign of the Palaiologan Dynasty from the middle of the 13th century, when art in the declining empire fell under the influences of Latin artistic elements.

Yet, the Byzantines were wary of the increased interest of western artists in experimenting with visual trickery to achieve fuller effects of optical life-likeness. Byzantines feared that artistic solutions in the Latin world moved thoroughly into the hands of individual artists and abandoned the theological conciliarity of the church. The Byzantine churchman Symeon of Thessalonica was deeply shocked by the naturalistic images and statues introduced by Latins in the 15th century, which he denounced as a breach of Christian tradition. The holy icons according to Symeon, "have been piously established in honour of their divine prototypes and for their relative worship by the faithful... and they instruct us pictorially by means of colours and other materials (which serve as a kind of alphabet)".[117] Whereas, he speaks of Latins "these men, who subvert everything, as has been said often confect holy images in a different manner and one that is contrary to custom. For instead of painted garments and hair, they adorn them with human hair and clothes".[118] The reference is obviously made to incorporating different materials to make the pieces of work closer to the real world. Symeon seems to be particularly concerned with the idea of mixing art with real life. This objection also leads him to condemning the western custom of staging "mystery plays with a biblical subject".[119]

Sylvester Syropoulos expressed his doubt about the terms in which the Latin images were inscribed (*ouk oida pos epigraphetai*) and that is why he only revered the sign of the cross which he made himself and not the images which he saw in the Latin churches.[120] Doubts

[117] Symeon of Thessalonica, *Contra Haereses*, ch, 23, Mango 1986, 254.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Sylvester Syropoulos, *Vera Historia*, Mango 1986, 254.

about the Latin way of painting clearly refers to the difference between Eastern and western Christian understanding of how appropriate is the use of mimetic presentation for sacred art.

Western medieval painting and sculpture revealed more interest in a mimetic presentation of the natural world than the art in Byzantium, which had a specific understanding of mimetic presentation. The Byzantine approach could be seen as a symbolic presentation rather than imitative; the very term mimesis is filled in Byzantium by a different meaning. Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite calls the symbolic image an 'unimitable imitation'. [121]

The fact remains that the Eastern Christian world saw the western tendency of turning towards naturalistic imagery in art as a revival of the artistic principles of pagan antiquity. The fear of idolatry moved from iconoclasts into the minds of Eastern Christians when they saw sculptural and illusionistic shapes in the Christian images still pretending to be icons.

The main criterion of defining an icon as Orthodox is that art should be a "window to heaven" while the Orthodox see the Latin painting as a "window on nature". A Byzantine artist paints from earth and opens up the heavenly realm, which is greatly manifested in the principle of the reversed perspective. The Latin artist on the other hand the Orthodox see as preoccupied with a disclosure of the earthly realm.

3.10. Western discussions on the importance of mimetic presentation in art since Renaissance up to the present day

The reference to all western art from the modern orthodox Christian perspective usually identifies it as a bearer of the Renaissance legacy and therefore encouraging materialism in art instead of preserving the authentic image of things though the use of medieval symbolism. According to Otto Demus' insightful distinction between Latin medieval and Byzantine approaches if "the western artist … created an illusion of space", then "the Byzantine artist aimed at eliminating the optical accidents of space. The Result of Western practice is a picture of reality; the aim of the Byzantine artist was to preserve the reality of the image". [122] Visual accuracy, which is essential for a western artist, looked like a blemish to the eyes of Byzantine viewers who expected art to keep intact the authentic sacred reality of eternal life. As Gervase Mathew rightly noted: "The transcendent conceived as the object

[121] Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Second letter to Gaius Therapeutes*.
[122] Demus, quoted by Uspenskii, B. 1976, 42.

of desire is the subject of all Byzantine mysticism"[123] and the Orthodox art illustrated the tendency most vividly. However, it can hardly follow that every artistic expression outside the boundaries of the liturgical space has to be deprived of the desire for the transcendent.

3.11. The social context of Renaissance art: battle between the sacred and secular

It is commonly accepted that Art remained in the service of religion before the Renaissance. The humanistic ideology of the Renaissance pushed its art to direct the artistic gaze towards earth and the natural world leaving a religious thematic applied superficially. Eastern Christians could never forgive their western brethren that they turned away their artistic 'gaze' from heaven and turned it towards the material aspect of the world known as fallen and sinful. The Byzantines justly assumed that the objective of western art changed since Latin painters started revealing excessive concern for sophisticating the visual resemblance of the material world in their art. Latin paintings were no longer icons but looked like mere pictures concerned with the reality of this world. Real women sat for paintings called *The Madonna*. The Renaissance images of Christ looked too human to save humankind. Renaissance art easily obtained a reputation for being secular for its tendency towards over-complimenting the material world while still painting a sacred subject.

New themes started emerging in Renaissance art gradually. The genre of portraiture had not been unknown to the world before Renaissance, though the Renaissance portraits became more interested in the idealized humanity of the person rather than glorifying emperors or pharaohs as was done in earlier times. Acknowledgment of nature gradually brought the genre of landscape into the backgrounds of pictures and only granted them an independent value later in the 18th century. The Roman antecedents of still-lives were also rediscovered in the background decorations of Renaissance paintings and were encouraged to claim an independent status later. The artistic acknowledgement of nature somehow obtained a label of 'secular' for its tendency towards stealing the attention of viewers from the religious meaning of the painting and engaging it into a visual game. The only reason for the contradiction between the two seemed to be the rivalry between the religious subject and the sense of awe incited by the mastery of the individual artist. The fascination with the medium, the excitement with the possibilities of experimentation with the material and thus achieve different results and techniques, must also be related to the first use of oil paints by

[123] Mathew 1964, 22.

Antonello De Messina in about 1450.[124] The West took the religious art more as a memorial, or as literally a 'book for the illiterate" than the East that saw liturgical art as an essential part and an inseparable experience of Christian worship. Religious painting, that was almost seen as an illustration of The Book, gradually adopted the naturalistic style of ancient Roman painting.

3.12. Western appreciation of mimetic presentation in Renaissance

The beginning of the Renaissance obviously saw naturalistic and emotional depiction as a revolutionary change in Christian artistic expression and therefore it was intriguing, shocking and attractive. According to Gombrich, Renaissance culture was looking for something new, not merely seeking a revival of the old. It is true that to people accustomed to the clear and graceful narratives of Gothic art, "Donatello's way of telling a story must have come as a shock".[125] Very few painters such as Fra Angelico "could make use of the new without changing the spirit of the old".[126] Renaissance artists sought not a complete abolition of the medieval tradition, but tried to extend it. Masaccio's art was perhaps less pleasing to the eyes of the Florentines but it was more sincere and moving.

Vasari, mocking the 'crude' and 'awkward' Byzantine style,[127] saw the organic unity of mimesis with the skill of the ancients that was reborn in the art of the high Renaissance. In the introduction to the second part of his *Lives of the Artists* he praises artists for their mastery of imitating nature. The truth is that western art never saw Medieval painting as a logical continuation of the ancient Roman legacy, but rather a stumbling block which stopped the continuity of its artistic development. Renaissance painters looked with great excitement at the Greek and Roman paintings for the artist's ability to use his eyes after the Egyptians has based their art solely on knowledge. They believed that "Once this revolution had begun, there was no way of stopping it".[128]

On the other hand, Gombrich observes that it is quite wrong to imagine that the study of Greek and Roman art *caused* the rebirth or 'Renaissance'. He believes that almost the opposite is true: "The artists round Brunelleschi longed so passionately for a revival of art

[124] Though the occasional use of oil colours has been recorded in earlier times long before Renaissance.
[125] Gombrich means particularly the picture 'The Feast of Herod', Gombrich 2007, 233.
[126] Gombrich 2007, 256.
[127] Vasari 2008, 16, 51.
[128] Gombrich 2007, 78.

that they turned to nature, to science and to the remains of antiquity to realize their new aims".[129] The art of the medieval West did not part from the Eastern tradition suddenly just as the schism between the East and West did not happen abruptly. Visual observations of nature and the following of artistic intuition appeared among the chief causes bearing the responsibility for the separation in the artistic traditions. Vasari's story of the Italian Renaissance starts with the discovery of the Giotto genius by Cimabue in a village where he was painting sheep on rocks as a boy with amazing, naturalistic accuracy.[130]

The art of the late middle ages in Northern Italy already revealed a tendency towards naturalism by the end of the 13th century. The painting of *The Madonna and Child* by Duccio[131] can be seen as one of the fine examples of this tendency. The painting still carries a similarity with a medieval icon; yet, the heavy, almost sculptural shapes of the virgin's body are so evident that they bring in a bodily mood and atmosphere. The baby's posture also rather represents him as a human child with rounded and heavy forms. He is either trying to touch his mother's face or he might be pointing to her eyes. Bringing in this rather "genre" element into the sacred image also places there a reference to worldly reality. Exposure of the shape of her breast also implies to her feminine and maternal nature, which the Byzantine icons conveys through expressing a caring element in her body language rather than her bodily shapes. The image of *Theotokos* in Byzantium is first and foremost the bearer of the word of God, she is the mother of God and the mother of all rather than a concrete woman. In Duccio's painting, however, she appears as a woman, even though her glory admits the fact that she is the most special woman for the whole of the Christian world. The drapery no longer looks like the collection of lines on a flat surface but it already implies a three dimensionality and sculptural character to each fold. The features on her face shape a rather sculptural surface especially at her nose, eyebrows and the neck. The white accents that show the highest point of the surface serve to emphasize the three dimensional nature of forms. This method was also greatly employed in Palaiologan art. However, in spite of implementing certain elements from the western manner of painting,

[129] Gombrich 2007, 235.
[130] Vasari 2008, 16.
[131] Illustration №28.

Byzantine art tended to use the same elements for stylization, for making the painting more expressive in a mannerist way rather than making them look more mimetic and natural.[132]

When we look for example at the fresco of the *Lamentation*[133] painted by Giotto Di Bondone, strangely enough the first impression that grabs our attention is not the tendency towards naturalism but the emotional atmosphere created by the artistic skills of the painter. The sadness of the scene is taking over and all the artistic means are obviously serving to emphasize this mood. Only after observing the gestures expressing the pathos of the picture one notices that the depictions of figures are not flat like they were in the middle ages, but there is a sense of space and human bodies are modelled with shaded sides as if they were shaped like rounded sculptures in space. For example, the exclamatory gesture of St John is conveyed by his hands raised and left slightly behind his back, we can see his left hand in the front, but his right hand is only partly visible for being depicted 'behind' his body, that also emphasizes the sense of space. Even the folds of the drapery have an impression of sculptural weight and shape. The figures are also not looking straight at the viewer frontally, but they are located in space from different angles, some of them and especially the one in the very middle of the picture is even placed with his back against us. Their centeredness on the figure of Christ and their location around him in the space creates more credibility not only in terms of realism and naturalism, but makes their concern and lamentation more realistically expressive. It is their sorrow that is expressed vividly by the new tricks employed by the artist. The centre here is not the person in the front who is depicted with his back against us, but the centre Christ and all the figures are gathered around him expressing their sorrow with weeping, some of them with daring and expressive gestures. Even the angels flying in the sky look like real bodily beings. The landscape however, remains as a layer behind the scene. The diagonal outline of the hill comes down from the right upper corner and takes the eye to the figure of Christ, and serves almost as a background for his body, thereby emphasizing visually his significance.

The link with the medieval tradition is still prevalent in Giotto's painting. He finds the new methods intuitively. Yet he is still faithful to traditional elements such as the use of outlines, the halos behind the saints' heads, etc. In spite of the attempt at creating a sense of space, the figures are still located one behind the other in layers, since they have the same

[132] Illustration №29.
[133] Illustration №30.

size and do not yet involve the principle of linear perspective. It is hard to argue whether Giotto's painting is completely detached from the principles of iconography, but most Orthodox Christians would regard it as a picture rather than an icon for its increased sense of emotional expression and interest in earthly shapes. Yet, All the newly discovered methods of naturalistic depiction serve here to make a narrative credible by stressing its mood and conveying the ambience rather than merely making the story readable.

One of the traditional elements in medieval art from which the Latins broke away was the principle of reversed perspective,[134] the idea of which was to see the reality from God's perspective and not from the human end. Using the visually correct linear perspective changed the objective in the work of art. The object of admiration has become the human world instead of the glory of God, expressed through the expansion of the perspective towards the figures of Saints.[135] The key point in this change is contained by the meaning of the Latin word 'perspectiva', which means 'seeing through'. The social background in which the Renaissance man had to see through was not the same as what the Byzantines and medieval painters were familiar with.

Linear perspective, which gradually involved the concept of aerial perspective, accompanied the principle of *modelling* the figures and suggested an inner space in the picture. One of the exciting aspects engaged "the idea that art could not only be used to tell the sacred story in a moving way, but might serve to mirror a fragment of the real world".[136] The painting on the wall was no longer seen as an illustration telling a story with the figures painted and outlined on a plain surface. but it appeared as a 'hole' in the wall that created an illusion of depth visually extending the space of the church. Masaccio's Holy Trinity with the virgin at Santa Maria Novella[137] can be regarded as one of the first examples of this method. The concept of perspective started intuitively as an artistic skill, though soon it turned into a scientific discovery and innovation based on the theory of mathematical precision. Treatises were composed on perspective by eminent theorists of art and architecture such as Leon Battista Alberti,[138] and Piero della Francesca.[139]

[134] The term was introduced by Oskar Wulff in his article in 1907.
[135] The notion of 'reverse perspective' was adopted by the Russian theologian Pavel Florensky in 1920.
[136] Gombrich 2007, 247.
[137] Illustration №31.
[138] Alberti, treatise *De pictura* (on painting) (1435) was the first fundamental study on perspective. The Italian translation was published in 1436.

Experimental uses of optical devices by Lorenzo Ghiberti, Filippo Brunelleschi and Leonardo Da Vinci proved the scientific element in art later to become a new fashion in Florence. The Renaissance artists' scientific approach to studying nature and arts defeated Plato's reservations about the inferior nature of mimetic arts and placed art side by side with science and philosophy as a rational study, to which Plato was, of course, immensely dedicated.

The 15th century is probably the most enthusiastic phase in the history of excitement over naturalistic depiction in Italian painting. The Quatrocento artists were not in the least aware that their commitment to strict geometrise and dedication to details could make their paintings more decorative than mimetic in the eyes of later generations. Their child-like enthusiasm for depicting all the details recalls the earlier excitement of the Byzantine Leo VI, who saw the flowers deceiving the bees in a Byzantine church. The urge for resembling the original was expressed on the level of a special affection, and the Quatrocento artists were never lazy to outline every single petal, leaf or a blade of grass with an enormous sense of love and care.[140] The character of visual resemblance was still stiff, and obtained fullness of harmony and a graceful expression only later in the High Renaissance of the 16th century.

The High Renaissance saw an evolution of the concept of mimesis as a resemblance to the real. The simple outline of a flower or a tree no longer satisfied the eye of an artist. The idea of visual deception was still as exciting to the great masters of the Renaissance as it was for the ancients and the Byzantines: "have we not seen pictures which bear so close a resemblance to the actual thing that they have deceived both men and beasts?"[141] Leonardo Da Vinci's new concept of *sfumatto* erased the outlines and boundaries of the silhouette and instead proposed the way of blurring the borders of the shape by using the colours that would impose a sense of light and mist.[142] Leonardo Da Vinci produced numerous experiments with visual effects while examining the laws of nature. Gombrich observed: "The forms of rocks and clouds, the effect of the atmosphere on the colour of distant

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[139] His three treatises *Abacus Treatise (Trattato d'Abaco)*, *Short Book on the Five Regular Solids (Libellus de Quinque Corporibus Regularibus)* and *On Perspective for Painting* (*De Prospectiva Pingendi*) address the subject from a mathematical perspective more than artistic.
[140] Illustration №32.
[141] Leonardo, in Goldwater 1972, 48.
[142] Illustration №33.

objects, the laws governing the growth of trees and plants, the harmony of sounds, all these were the objects of his ceaseless research, which was to be the foundation of his art".[143] The exploration of nature for Leonardo was the way of "gaining knowledge of the visible world, such as he would need for his art".[144] The combination of a technician and an observer, which Leonardo's paintings bring in front of our eyes reveals the true mastery over the form – the dream of every Renaissance artist. More observation of nature made it clear that the sense of space was present not only in air and between objects but it could also change the feeling of textures and surfaces and make them look more tangible. Details were no longer admired, for there was a way of creating the sense of the whole composition where the leaves, flowers and grass could be presented as organic yet more generalized part of the composition pointing to the central and essential in the picture. The mimetic value in High Renaissance moved from the precision of outline to the credibility of the message and the character of the composition.

Gombrich believes that the importance of the mimetic demand in the history of art from Giotto to the Impressionists, does not lie in the fact that it is "the 'essence' or 'duty' of art to imitate the real world". Nor, he believes, is this demand entirely irrelevant.[145] The use of imitation or mimetic resemblance did not have an unanimous approval in the West. Radical Early Christian thinker Tertullian even believed that God forbids any imitation of this world.[146] The Scholastics of the middle ages like Bonaventura believed that spiritual representations are superior and more valuable than material ones and what the artists paint externally reflects what they thought internally.[147] However, the twelfth century humanists like John of Salisbury and Thomas Aquinas repeatedly reminded us of the Platonic theory that 'art imitates nature'.[148]

The Renaissance revived the Roman term "imitation" and made it again a basic concept in art theory. It was readopted in the beginning of the 15 Century, particularly in Lorenzo Ghiberti's Comentaries, (1436), in which he spoke about having striven to imitate nature as

[143] Gombrich 2007, 294.
[144] Gombrich 2007, 294.
[145] Gombrich 2007, 595.
[146] Tertullian, *Despectaculis,* XXIII.
[147] Bonaventura, III, Sent., D 37 dub, referred by Tatarkiewicz 2011, 269.
[148] Thommas Acquinas, *Phys*., II,4.

much as he possibly could.[149] According to the Renaissance theories, art imitates the laws of nature,[150] its norms, its beauty rather than merely passively copying and presenting its outward appearance on a canvas. Michaelangelo proclaimed that it is God-in-nature who should be imitated.[151] He even renounced the Renaissance rules at the end of his life, and started producing works with a tendency toward abstract generalization. His group of unfinished sculptures of slaves[152] is often justly regarded as the earliest predecessor of modern abstractionism. Renaissance art started with the desire to imitate the visible world but ended with the desire to point towards the invisible realm through the visual form.

3.13. The poetics of western painting

The unique character of each period in art history posed the rationale of art from different angles. Conveying the message through the familiar images is the foundation of every period yet the mimetic resemblance alone has never been enough for any art to communicate the message. Artefacts can be finely executed in all the details of pictorial and even mathematical precision, yet they still may not be able to stand up to the standards of great art unless they possess a certain sense of poetry that finds different forms considering the socio-historical reality of each epoch.

The gap between poetry and realism is obvious in terms of considering history as a field of documentary scholarship and poetry as a fictional interpretation of history. As Aristotle suggested, art does not say what happened, but it proposes something that could have happened or might happen. Therefore, "correctness in poetry is not identical with correctness in politics nor in any other art".[153] Heidegger is convinced that "Art happens as poetry. Poetry is founded in the triple sense of bestowing, grounding and beginning… Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history".[154] Art is a material illustration of history, not by its historical content, but precisely by its character, that portrays the peculiarities of its contemporary era.

The origin of the debates over the inseparability of painting and poetry can be traced back as far as the ancient world. Plutarch recorded the old saying: "Painting is silent poetry, and

[149] Ghiberti, 1948, c.1450-55.
[150] Alberti, quoted by Tatarkiewicz 2011, 271.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Illustration №34.
[153] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1460b.
[154] Heidegger, from Cooper 1997, 357.

poetry [is] painting that speaks".[155] Yet, the contention over the view of art as a skill (*techne*) and art as something more than the mastery of execution has puzzled the theorists of art since Plato. Only that part of *poiesis* that is separated from the rest and is concerned with music – *mousike* and melodic measures, is called poetry. And those who share in its possession are called poets.

In Plato's terms, every artistic genius that depends on the inspiration of the muse belongs to the realm of *mousike* and is appending to poetry.[156] The term poetry can often be found used interchangeably with the Greek term *mousike* signifying the union of song, dance, and word to which the Muses gave their name. Both poetry and music necessarily bear the connotation of a certain grace generating an aesthetic pleasure, which is inseparable from the idea of the sensual appreciation of beauty.

Poetry as a literary art, finds its distinction by the use of metaphor, rhythm and aesthetic vision and possesses an uplifting, inspirational, elevating power. Metaphoric language according to Aristotle is an element that gives a work a poetic quality and gets rid of any prosaic nature.[157] Aristotle posed the imagination as a chief agent in making art rather than mimicking the existent, and distinguished between knowing – *Theoria,* doing – *praxis,* and making – *poiesis.* His concept of *poiesis* is different from Plato's concept of *mimesis.* His poetics divides imitative art into 1) the art of imitating visual appearances by means of colours and drawing and 2) the art of poetry, the imitation of a human action (praxis) through verse, song and dance. Art offers more than the existent world or the record of facts: it conveys what could or might have happened. Aristotle saw art itself as a form of metaphor, and mastering it meant the ability to make connections. The visual object can make references to the invisible realm through the use of metaphor. Art's power to elevate and inspire implies the ability of art to combine the focus on naturalistic presentation with the contemplation of something unreal, unattainable and intangible. This double effectiveness produced by the synergy between mimesis and poetry instigated the search for the detachment from the real world into the ideal realm of fantasy offered by mythological and religious content.

[155] Attributed to Simonides by Plutarch in his *De Gloria Atheniensium,* III, 346.
[156] See Plato, *Symposium,* 205c.
[157] Aristotle, *Poetics,* 22, 1459a.

The Renaissance artists were convinced that they brought the religious subject down to earth and made it look real and life-like. Yet, the occasional mixing up of religious subjects with the mythological suggested the Renaissance art's superficial interest in religious content and to its increased interest to idealization and looking for supernatural. The concept of mimesis in Renaissance art is obviously inclined towards the Aristotelian view that art should imitate nature not as it is but as it could or should be, by removing and correcting its faulty elements suggesting the need for selectiveness in the choice of the subject matter and also in the manner of presentation. Renaissance writers stressed the idea that not every imitation serves art, but only that which is 'good', 'artistic', 'beautiful' and 'imaginative'.[158] Nature lacked a human cooperation for attaining a higher level of perfection. Ficino called art: 'wiser than nature'.[159] Even Vasari who was the fieriest applauder of a naturalistic manner of painting admitted the inferiority of nature that had been "vanquished by art".[160] The Renaissance interest in naturalism only emphasized the role of an artwork as a human contribution to God's plan for perfecting the world and expanding its goodness.

Interestingly enough it was the realistic 'genre' painting, which celebrated the artistic ability of seeing poetry even in the most trivial and prosaic aspects of human life. The examples of the tendency towards poeticising the 'banal' can be seen in the paintings of the painters such as Vermeer, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Murillo and a few others. Rembrandt and Velasquez stand out by their almost pastoral ability to dignify the poor and the resentful. The portraits of the elderly by Rembrandt present people who would not, in life, be looked upon with the degree of affection and care that these portraits demonstrate.

In Hegel's view, it is after the Reformation that painting and poetry started focusing its attention on the prosaic details of ordinary daily life, rather than on idealization, religious love or the magnificence of tragic heroes. Hegel is wondering whether realistic paintings still count as "art works" in the strictly philosophical (as opposed to the more generally accepted) sense of the term. His view is that such works count as genuine works of art only when they do more than merely imitate nature. The naturalistic and prosaic works that best

[158] Guarini, Varchi, Alberti, Comanini's *imitation fantastica*, etc.
[159] Ficino, quoted by Tatarkiewicz 2011, 273.
[160] Vasari 2008, 299.

meet this criterion, he maintains, are the paintings of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch masters.

The Dutch realists, Hegel claims, do not aim simply to show us the appearance of grapes, flowers or trees but, rather, to capture the "life" (*Lebendigkeit*) of things: "the lustre of metal, the shimmer of a bunch of grapes by candlelight, a vanishing glimpse of the moon or the sun, a smile, the expression of a swiftly passing emotion".[161] The still-life painter seeks to delight us with the animated play of the colours of gold, silver, velvet or fur creating the feeling of touching their textures. We encounter not just the depiction of things, but "as it were, an objective music, a peal in colour [*ein Tönen in Farben*]".[162]

Hegel considers a genuine work of art as the sensuous expression of divine or human freedom and life. Merely imitative paintings would fall short of the quality of genuine art. Dutch artists, however, turn their prosaic depictions into masterpieces by imbuing objects with "the fullness of life".[163] The objective of these paintings is not the classical beauty of Greek art, but they exhibit the intimate atmosphere of everyday modern life with a great sense of care and respect.

The Hegelian appreciation of Dutch realism suggests that the language of art itself is a bearer of poetic intuition. By the eighteenth century, although the sense of art as a skill remained, it was frequently illustrated by reference to the art of producing poetry or painting. The definition of *Kunst* by this time formulated as the 'ability' or 'skill' of a human being 'to bring into existence a thing outside of itself', as for example when 'the skill of a poet brings a poem into existence'.[164]

Kant defines art as a 'human skill, distinguished from science'.[165] He reserves particular attention for the fine arts and distinguishes it from handicrafts, which produce without an intention, and the mechanical arts, which perfectly realize their intention. The practice of fine arts produces works, which paradoxically 'must be clothed with the aspect of nature, although we recognise it to be art'.[166] In other words the only way of artistic expression for

[161] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:599.
[162] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:598–600.
[163] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 1:599.
[164] Meissner's Wolffian *Philosophisches Lexikon* (1737).
[165] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, §43.
[166] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, §45.

Kant, as well as for others, consists in pointing to something beyond the visible through the familiar forms and images.

3.14. The poetics of modern painting

The whole of twentieth-century painting is "a reaction against the meretricious art of the successful virtuoso".[167] Lifeless Academism and mechanical precision in naturalistic painting reached the point when they provoked a feeling of revolt among the seekers of genuine expression in art. Soloviev complained that his contemporary European nations had exhausted all other kinds of art known to us and if art had a future, then, he predicted, it was going to be a completely new sphere of action.[168] The interest in naturalism was destined to expire sooner or later, but the concept of mimetic resemblance as an artistic virtue approached its end after photography was invented in the first decades of the 19th century: making a perfect copy of reality no longer required the artist's brush and painterly skills.

Behind the moralistic intentions or political messages, however, was the art of finding, portraying and expressing the message. The skill of making a painting with an assured power required great mastery in treating visual forms and shapes. The visual language itself appeared more powerful and expressive than any other form could be. Courbet saw the power of imagination not in inventing something non-existent but "in knowing how to find the most complete expression of an existing thing".[169] Finding the right expression for the particular form became as important as finding the right form for a particular message. The empty naturalism, academism, symbolism and idealism turned into the enemies of creative reason.

The lessening of interest in naturalistic presentation obviously posed a question: what else could art do? Retrospectively it shed a new light on the meaning of art. Western society, before the end of the 19th century, had become accustomed to figurative presentation in art, and the increasing sophistication of visual precision became the major trend in art from the Renaissance on. Every period and every artist tried to make the depiction look more real than his predecessors managed. Every artist believed that he aimed at presenting things life-like and real. However the standard of the 'real' varied from epoch to epoch and from one

[167] Gombrich 2006, 203.
[168] Soloviev 2003, 81.
[169] Courbet, "The Realist Manifesto".

artist to another. In spite of the obvious continuity in the western European artistic legacy, Goethe warned against a simplistic concept of artistic progress that considered only the value of mimetic skill and neglected a respect for formal values.[170] The emergence of modern painting pointed to wider artistic values beyond merely imitating and representing what the eye saw. The impressionists first discovered that the immediate optical experience offered a more realistic presentation of nature and things than the academic realism based on principles and rules. Academism became a burden and a stumbling block in the artists' attempt at sincere and faithful presentation of nature in its true sense. Paul Klee believed that the only reason for an artist to concern himself with microscopy is with "a view to mobility. He is not interested in a scientific check on fidelity to nature"[171] but only in freedom.

Gombrich rightly admits humanity's exaggerating tendency towards lamenting the end of true art in the 20th century (and indeed in previous eras). Every critical period warned about the death of art "in whole countries and civilizations when the last link snapped. But somehow and somewhere the final disaster was always averted. When old tasks disappeared new ones turned up which gave artists that sense of direction and sense of purpose without which they cannot create great works".[172] It was taken for granted for a very long period of history that art somehow had to be like an illustration, like the role now largely taken by photography. Once the public eye becomes familiar with certain style and appearances, its fading away and change can easily cause confusion and fear, resulting in insecurity on the public's side.

Art nowadays has experimented so far as to even abolish the use of painting, and displaying the installations in a real space, which is turned into a work of art synthesising the fields of painting, architecture, design and even music in some cases.[173] Since the 20th century, in the world of pluralism and subjectivism the antipoetic reputation of modern art was basically caused by the fragmentation of artistic means and its language. The Impressionists earlier started fragmenting compositional painting by their daring statements, such as cutting the edge of the picture instead of showing a finished composition, and emphasising

[170] See Gombrich 2006, 181.
[171] Klee 1961, 3.
[172] Gombrich 2007, 595.
[173] Illustration №37.

the optical properties of particular colours and their interrelation. Artistic means began to occupy the place once held by the subject matter.

Abstractionism was another key movement in modern art that revolutionized the whole course of art history. The desire for dematerialization is often admired by Orthodox thinkers as a preference for the spiritual element over the material.[174] Kandinsky's abstraction is often seen as more than a particular movement in painting. It reveals the fundamental truth of all art: all art is abstract and on the other hand, there is no such thing as abstract art as long as it involves a material medium. Kandinsky the founder of abstract art, still remains faithful to the symbolic use of figurative presentation in his paintings and his paintings are rarely completely abstract.[175] His religious sensibility cannot escape applauds by the Orthodox Christians.[176]

Just as much as Jackson Pollock's enormous canvases once perplexed society about the rationale of art, One may wonder today while looking at the latest installations in art galleries if there is any sense of poetry in modern art and even if it can be qualified as art at all. Interestingly enough, many 20th century painters considered the concept of poetic intuition more ardently than the painters of earlier times. It would be unwise to attempt to measure and compare the different degrees of poeticism in the art of the Dutch realists and the paintings of Kazimir Malevich.[177] The intimacy of sometimes harsh situations, warmed and softened by the use of light, the detailed descriptions of textures, and the naivety of sincere presentations, would appear somewhat irrelevant when juxtaposed with the ambiguous meanings of abstract paintings composed of a conglomeration of geometric forms, colours and lines.

The antipoetic reputation of modern art is basically derived from its disinterestedness in nature and the fact that it "renounces seeing into the inner depths of the world of Nature, of visible and corporeal Being".[178] Maritain ardently condemns the modern tendency of

[174] Charles Lock makes the point that the old-believers enthusiastically preserved the Orthodox legacy which they believed was betrayed by Nikon. They organized exhibitions until 1917 where they combined both icons and Modernist paintings. The works of European modern art came "from the families, which had invested deeply traditional icons, not commercially but spiritually". See Lock 2008, 30.
[175] Illustration №38.
[176] Yet, his involvement with theosophist groups in Germany turned posed his name as controversial in modern Russia.
[177] Illustration №39.
[178] Maritain 1954, 218.

rejecting figurative composition and believes that "the crucial mistake of abstract art has been to reject – unwittingly – poetic intuition, while rejecting systematically the existential world of Things".[179] The poetry is to be discerned in the world of objects, in the real world. However, the question "What is real?" concerning the artistic presentation goes back as far as Plato. Even the most precise imitation of the real world is destined to have another being beyond that which it imitates. The poetic element in artistic presentation lies precisely in art's ability to describe the character of the depicted object, rather than to describe its appearance accurately.

The 20th century art pointed to the particulars, elements, the means of artistic expression and materials as the objects of artistic interest themselves, which have the lives of their own and generate emotions in human minds. As a psychoanalyst rightly pointed out, the essence of art "lies precisely in the concrete representation of the abstract".[180] Rothko also believed that "the world of appearances is the world of particulars".[181] Looking back at the development of the nature of western painting one can say that all art is really 'abstract'; every art is freed from any adherence to the external, visible world that is only a form conveying a greater message.

Malevich, in 1914, in his mystical Suprematism, arrived at the point of capturing the essence of colour and form. His experiments in realism and impressionism, cubism, and futurism, ended with an interest in the expression of the volume of colour. The notion of the substantiality of colour space within the colour was further evaluated by Rothko, later extending to the level of dematerialization, instead of feeling its weight and hardness. Rothko performs the mystery by putting colours transparently, yet solidly. The black square on red looks like black from a distance. Yet, it turns out to have a transparent and foggy texture on a closer encounter. The texture displays a certain interplay of light and dark and makes the surface look lifelike. The transparency and the inner dynamism of colour appears as if charged with the pulsation of inner life, hidden in the depth created by the atmosphere within the colour. The colour squares in Rothko's paintings are never flat or outlined, they open a different kind of perspective, which is neither linear, nor aerial, but have a more emotional or *noetic* dimension.

[179] Maritain 1954, 219.
[180] Rank 1923, 415.
[181] Rothko 2004, 34.

Abstraction offered a refuge to the poetic ideals of human creativity. Controversy between the naturalistic and modernistic styles in the 20th century acquired a political dimension. The idea of using realistic painting for political purposes reached its peak in the art of social realism in Soviet Union. The Soviet social realism aimed at celebrating the regime rather than politically opposing it, like Courbet and the French realists did.

Clement Greenberg, on the other hand, encouraged and commissioned American artists like Jackson Pollock to produce something shockingly different that would oppose the concept of Social Realist painting in Soviet Union. The political opponent of Soviet realism dictated a new style and a new concept of art, which became known as abstract expressionism. Greenberg pretended to propose the concept of 'art for art's sake' free from all worldly concerns. Yet, the new commissioner's plans employed the concept of pure art as a political weapon against Soviet Politics. On the other hand, the use of realism for political resistance in Soviet union was in fact used effectively by those great cinematographers who concealed their messages in their artistic/fictional form as in the films by Eisenstein, Tarkovsky and a few others of the time.

The relation of poetry to reality contains an element of what might be termed a "dream-like reality". It speaks through real forms, and yet transforms them into intangible reflections. Poetry, like a dream, is not a rational and decisive phenomenon, it has its source in the "preconceptual life of the intellect".[182] It has been considered as normal throughout the history of western art, including modern times, for artists to start their artistic search with naturalistic paintings, as taught in art schools and academies. Only after reaching a certain level of mastery over the form, may an artist begin to find and develop his or her own style. The mastery over the form remains as a way of earning the right to speak with an individual voice.

The question of poetry being the means or the end in artistic presentation is vividly exemplified in the works of surrealists and the art of Salvador Dali in particular. Surrealism declared the era of wireless imagination. Wires implied the chains of oppression of reason and logic. The absurd and bizarre stood for the poetic in Surrealist vision. The surrealists believed in the originality of any thought even if it was completely bizarre and appalling. They had an admiration for a poetic genius who could shock the world even if the shock

[182] Maritain 1954, 4.

involved irrational as "terminating a woman's body with a tail of a fish"[183] while the second man who repeated the idea would have been "nothing but a bureaucrat".[184] The images in Dali's paintings appearing through the other images can hardly be qualified as presentations of the inner beings of their original images. Nor can there be found adequate and rational connections between them. Photographical precision of form and figures imply to symbolic meanings occasionally but soon lose the assurance and even realism. Dali, vastly influenced and inspired by Freudian psychoanalysis, and trying deliberately to adopt elements from Freud's observations into his own art and life, was unable to hide disturbing elements in his art, which prevents the true sense of poetry from indwelling in his artistic output.

Even though Maritain is negative about the result which Surrealism ended up with, he had respect for Surrealism as a spiritual phenomenon; he appreciated its considerable intensity, in which we see "high qualities of the spirit fall from above, and poetry fated to doom cast its last secret flame at the boundaries of death".[185] Maritain's criticism of the Surrealists addressed their separation from "intellectual light, the automatic life of the unconscious is fundamentally unable to reveal anything really new".[186] The dreaminess of poetic intuition in the works of surrealists outweighed the determination of poetic will and the lack of balance ended in setting the dream-world as an end itself. In spite of the presence of genuine poetry in Surrealist poets, Maritain rightly observes that "they fall short of their own dogma, and obey despite themselves, the secret music of intelligence".[187] Maritain is also right in noting that by overmastering naturalistic resemblance and filling it with a dream-like content the Surrealist painters in fact restored "the most baneful and antipoetic tenet of academism, against which every genuine art, and modern art for its part, have waged war, namely the primacy of the *subject* represented".[188] Yet, the Surrealists replaced the cult of beauty with a sense of mysterious horror. Therefore, the Surrealists missed the poetic element by attempting to make it their final goal. Every true artistic creation employs poetry as a tool to point towards the eternal, instead of letting the poetic element take over and become an object of admiration itself.

[183] Breton, *Surrealist Manifesto*, 1924.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Maritain 1954, 80.
[186] Maritain 1954, 81.
[187] Maritain 1954, 81.
[188] Maritain 1954, 82.

Maritain calls poetry "the spirit of our art or as the creative source of the artist's workings".[189] Imitating nature is neither a virtue nor a requirement for great art. It is precisely through the maturity of poetic vision that nature finds its full articulation and true meaning. In Soloviev's words nature has been either a despotic mother of an infant humanity, or a foreign slave to it, but only the "poets alone somewhat preserved and upheld at least an unconscious and timid feeling of love toward nature as toward a being with equal rights, which had or was capable of having life in itself. True poets always remained prophets of a universal restoration of life and beauty".[190] Poetry as the quest for the unknown and supreme authenticity has been the uniting element of all the arts of all times, including modern art, notwithstanding the pragmatic and unexciting reputation of some of the modern 'isms'.

Summary

This chapter demonstrated the continuity in the formation of the meaning of art since prehistoric times up to the modernism of the twentieth century. Selectiveness in the chronological order of the periods in art history was necessitated by the intention to seize the general principle in artistic presentation that has not changed since the origin of artistic activity up to the present day. Looking back to prehistoric paintings reveals the authentic meaning of art in its pure and innate form. The first extant examples of artistic creations manifest the element of artistic intuition that emerges from a form of personal observation rather than academic study and well calculated pursuit. The highly intuitive nature of prehistoric painting makes it impossible to separate the rationale of artistic creation from its theological significance. The meaning of art was closely tied to religious function and meaning since its foundation. However, much later the Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus theorized and articulated the concept of artistic presentation. Greek thought struggled to figure out the relation between the material world and the immaterial mission of art. Plato discerned the art's tendency towards imitating the existent world and introduced his famous concept of *mimesis*. Aristotle pointed out the purifying or *cathartic* impact of the artistic creation as the function and main ingredient in art. Plotinus however, saw the artistic way of presenting existing objects as a way of learning the essence of things that is invisible, and exists beyond the visual presentation,

[189] Maritain 1954, 6.
[190] Soloviev 2003, 132.

referring to the *idea* and the *logos* of things, which stands closest to the Orthodox Christian understanding of matter and artistic presentation.

Throughout the different epochs since the earliest times, the idea of life-likeness in art was conjoined with the sense of dynamism and emotional expression without which life is hardly imaginable. The Byzantine standard of resemblance and the life-like in art might have been different from that of the Roman and Greek perception of it, but the admiration and excitement about the notion shared the same level. However, when the Italian masters increased their focus on the life-like and on resembling the visual realm, the Byzantines responded with great doubt and severe condemnation. They saw the Italian Renaissance as a break away from the tradition on the grounds of focusing the liturgical consciousness on the outward resemblance of the earthly and fallen world. The fact that the tendency towards dematerialization extended further in modernist painting of the 20th century up to the present day, may seem encouraging to many Orthodox Christian thinkers. Yet, a stress on the poetics of visual presentation could draw western contemporary painting closer to the elements of iconography, but regarding the strive towards dematerialisation as a bridge between the two ought to be highly debatable from the Orthodox theological point of view.

This chapter argues that the accusations of western art's worldliness and its alienation from religious ideals are vastly exaggerated. Philip Sherrard in spite of his objections against western art rightly pointed out that "the concept of a completely profane world – of a cosmos wholly desacralized – is a fairly recent invention of the human mind".[191] The sacred seed can find its expression in different forms at different times, but they are still present even in the fallen and corrupt world. Many paintings can show the perfect resemblance of the real world but not all of them can point beyond themselves. As Vladimir Soloviev wisely proposed, the authentic connection between art and nature is to be discerned "not in a repetition, but in an extension of the artistic act that is begun by nature – in an impending and more complete resolution of the same aesthetic problem".[192] Art therefore stands not as a copy or an imitation of the 'real' but possesses an independent and a 'real' value as a fruit of human and divine collaboration adding and enriching the God's created world.

[191] Sherrard 1990, 17.
[192] Soloviev 2003, 68.

Chapter 4

Possible Ways of Perceiving Western Art from an Orthodox Christian Perspective

Introduction

This Chapter will attempt to point out the complexities involved in the perception of art and refer to their theological significance and influence. Western art as a non-liturgical entity faces the danger of being neglected and overlooked by Orthodox Christian communities, since liturgical art is usually considered as the true manifestation of art, as opposed to western art as "the lowest form of painting".[1] Nevertheless, Western art as well as non-western secular art exist and deserve a measured Christian appreciation, rather than condemnation and neglect. Iconography has a strictly liturgical function, which cannot be replaced or performed in any other way. Secular art, on the other hand, provides intellectual and spiritual nourishment within the broader context of liturgical life. A Christian whose intellect is enlightened by liturgical consciousness and Gospel values is more likely to employ every encounter with the masterpieces of western art for the sake of spiritual growth and maturity.

The first thing that a modern art critic would advise an amateur spectator, is to focus on grasping the character of the painting rather than to read the literary concept of its plot. The emergence of avant-garde painting and Abstractionism in particular, demonstrated more vividly in the 20th century the metaphysical potentials of art while the power of the means of expression anticipates a response subjecting the intellect to impressions and feelings. The difference between the amateur and educated eye usually consists of the one's inability to discern beyond the rational part of the narrative, and the other's tendency to analyze the metaphysical meaning discerned through the connections between the particulars. The distinctive rationale of art is not in a mere story-telling, but it is an experience coming from the whole character or atmosphere created in the picture, which manipulates the whole being of the observer, including the rational and emotional. Art *can* be read as a story, but it can also be taken to the next level where it can be understood and appreciated for its power of transforming the viewer's inner self and conveying a certain mood.

Any competition between the prayerful contemplation of the Orthodox ascetic tradition and the aesthetic contemplation of secular art would be totally irrelevant. The aesthetic response

[1] Kontoglou, in Cavarnos 2004, 27.

to the work of art is in fact a response to one's desire for transformation and for inner maturity through cultivating one's senses and refining the skills of perception. Responding to an artwork is in itself a kind of art. The work of art is moving, interesting and amusing not because it moves, interests or pleases but because it offers something that forces us to grow towards eternal light. The famous quotation of Oscar Wilde's humorous response about the success of his play explains the audience's contribution to making the work of art: the play "is already a success: the only question is whether the audience will be a success!"[2]

4.1. The Orthodox Christian concern over the subjective and sensual nature of the western concept of aesthetics

The concept of sensual pleasure originating from the contemplation of beauty and the beautiful has always been part of the rationale of art. Yet, the idea of aesthetic appreciation in its modern sense inevitably springs from the famous proposition of the idea in 1735, when the twenty-one year old Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten introduced it in his Halle master's thesis to mean *epistêmê aisthetikê*, or the science of what is sensed and imagined.[3] The term he used was "cognition sensitive" that is usually translated as a "sensate cognition", "sensate thinking" or "sensate knowledge".

Kant criticised Baumgarten on grounds of terminology, and considered the true meaning of the word *aesthetic* to be the *critique of taste*.[4] Nine years later Kant employed the word *aesthetic* in his *Critique of Judgement* to indicate the judgement of taste or the 'estimation of the beautiful'. Kant argues that aesthetic judgement is inclined to be subjective since it originates from the internal feeling of pleasure or displeasure, defining a *proper* aesthetic attitude is "disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever".[5]

Certain puritanical aestheticism[6] justly provoked unease in the minds of modern Orthodox scholars who were likely to be acquainted with western aesthetic theories. Ouspensky not unreasonably called aestheticism 'the plague of our times'.[7] In spite of his dislike of

[2] Pearson 1946, 227.
[3] Baumgarten 1974, §CXVI, 86–87.
[4] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, §1, (Weigelt, 2008, 24), footnote.
[5] Kant in Stolnitz 1960, 34-5.
[6] See Appendices 4.1 and 4.2
[7] Ouspensky 1978, 17.

puritanical aestheticism, the truth remains that aestheticism of a certain degree in 19th and 20th century Russia played a crucial part in creating an enormous literary legacy known as the Russian Enlightenment, priding itself on its moralistic, inspiring, didactic and edifying nature. Dostoyevsky is usually referred to as the one who openly pointed to the salvific nature of beauty when one of his characters ridiculed Prince Myshkin for believing that "beauty will save the world".[8] However, excessive admiration for beauty was already quite a widespread phenomenon among the Russian intellectuals of the time. The phenomenon of beauty itself stood against the idea of the ugliness of industrialization and absorbance of the human soul into machinery. Aesthetic appreciation was valued in Russia just as much as it was admired in the West. The sense of beauty forced the Russian symbolist poets to depart from their symbolist language: they wanted to admire a rose "because it is beautiful, not because it is a symbol of mystical purity".[9] Yet, traditional thought in Russia, deeply rooted in Orthodox Christian consciousness, granted the appreciation of beauty a character of *theurgic* experience instead of *aesthetic*.

The contemptuous attitude to Prince Myshkin's salvific vision of beauty was further evaluated by Leo Tolstoy in 1897 when he criticized Baumgarten in his article "What is Art?" Tolstoy opposed the Baumgarten's vision of good, truth and beauty in unity and instead he argued that these three have nothing in common and may even oppose each other. According to Tolstoy the tendency towards uniting these three concepts resulted in abolishing the difference between good art and bad art just as much as it abolished the boundaries between goodness, truth and beauty. He believed that the very attitude produced the lowest manifestation of art that was designed for mere pleasure, which later came to be regarded as the highest form of art. Tolstoy opposed the western concept of aesthetics and saw it as responsible for turning art into "not the important thing it was intended to be, but the empty amusement of idle people".[10]

The Russian approach to the concept of beauty and aesthetics in the subsequent period fluctuated between two ideals: Philosophical thought, on the one hand, showed admiration of beauty and the beautiful to be already a carrier of a sacred element in spite of its

[8] Dostoyevsky 2004, ch.7, 609.
[9] Quoted by Vernandsky 1961, 202.
[10] Tolstloy 1995, 53.

insufficiency,[11] while the clerical approach saw beauty detached from concepts of truth and goodness, and possibly even opposed to them.[12] The doubts about aesthetic appreciation became equally widespread in Greece when the nation struggled to protect its own identity against the beautiful artistic expression of the Turkish arabesques. Both in Russia and in Greece the association of beauty became closely tied into a political agenda threatening the national and cultural identity.

Orthodox theologians are not unreasonable in their apprehension over the concept of aestheticism. The West itself doubted and re-examined the concept over the last two centuries. In the 20th century, 'art for art's sake' drew more consistent opposition from a series of avant-garde who reacted against the perceived limitation of abstract art, and sought instead to reconnect art and life. One can trace such opposition in movements as diverse as Constructivism, Dada and Surrealism, and the many post-war movements that have revived earlier avant-garde strategies, such as Conceptual Art and Pop Art. For many of the Constructivists, for example, the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' was an obstacle preventing art from being put in the service of social revolution. Meanwhile, many different artists, such as Marcel Duchamp, attacked the doctrine as a falsehood, arguing that it merely serves to conceal and protect a particular set of values encouraging snobbery and hypocrisy while his most influential attack on 'art for art's sake' confirmed in a reversed manner that art does not and cannot be understood outside the context of the real life.

Besides, the West also developed a specific vision of art from a psychological perspective. A Swiss art critic and historian Heinrich Wölfflin in his dissertation: *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur* (1886) argued that the character of architecture could be understood from a purely psychological point of view as opposed to the prevailing historical progressivism. According to his theory, architecture has a basis in form through the empathetic response of human form. It is considered one of the founding texts of the emerging discipline of art psychology. Wilhelm Worringer also introduced the earliest theoretical justification for Abstractionism providing the psychoanalytical background of the movement.[13]

[11] The Soloviev's approach was later developed by the Russian émigrés in France such as Berdyaev, Skobtsova and others. See Appendixes to Chapter 1.
[12] The Tolstoyan view was closer to the ideals of the Old Believers and called to the exclusive devotion to church customs and rituals.
[13] Worringer 1953.

The artists of the twentieth century such as Naum Gabo, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky were greatly influenced by the psychological argument that posed art as perceivable strictly through the medium of senses. The most symptomatic element of 20th century western aesthetics is perhaps its increased tendency towards conceptualization. If the art of the past centuries aimed at an immediate response of the viewer, understanding modern art demands the examination of a variety of issues contributing to the expression of the work, apart from the socio-historical context. Picasso's simultaneity of the different points of view reflects well the pluralistic nature of the modern world.[14] The challenges that modern art offers to its viewers largely moved from the focus on beauty to the contemplation of values that never vanish, yet, the discovery of the message comes through endless explanations as much on the part of the artist as derived from the previous knowledge of the viewer. Ironically enough 20th century western aesthetics developed an element of rationalism precisely through the escape from figurative presentation, and through pointing towards the realm of senses.

The Orthodox proclaim with confidence that Orthodox liturgical art celebrates the authentic rationale of art. Art should point to the eternal, which ultimately inspires the urge for salvation, through embracing the eternity of God. Yet the Orthodox would hesitate to apply the same principle to the perception of Western art, which as some thinkers believe "works only through passions, which it even transforms into aesthetical feelings".[15] An Orthodox priest fears that "passion can lead us to the state of a certain almost ecstatic inspiration but these ecstasies will not purify, but incite the arousal of body and blood, which we, by deceiving ourselves will take as a spiritual state".[16] Likewise, a modern Greek Orthodox theologian fears that the paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci offer "a mirror of the passion of the viewer, as it was a mirror of the passion of Leonardo himself".[17] This observation motivates the modern scholar to "locate the beginning of contemporary pornography in the Renaissance paradigm shift" and believe that "it is not a painting that could have been created by a woman, nor can it be enjoyed by a woman in the same way as by a man".[18] The modern Orthodox often see the ultimate problem in the libidinous nature of western artistic expression since the Renaissance. The belief emerges that the art of Leonardo as a

[14] Illustration №49.
[15] Karelin 1991, 132.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Andreopoulos 2006, 86.
[18] Ibid.

Renaissance man par excellence "exploits, in a way, the sexual mystery of the surface and its appeal, and at the same time it signifies the lack of true contact between the passionate narcissistic viewer and the woman on the canvas".[19]

At least two modern Orthodox thinkers believe that there is an inseparable bridge between the sense-perception involved in art and the passion-filled sensual device employed by sexual desire. The same cautiousness is responsible for ascetic flight from the pleasures of this world. An excessive enjoinment of pleasure is considered as the most powerful guide towards sin, even though the device of experiencing emotional, bodily or intellectual pleasure is part of human nature and is not considered sinful on its own.

Aesthetic pleasure is most commonly associated with the senses. Evagrius makes a distinction between: "The songs inspired by demons [that] incite our desire and plunge our soul into shameful fancies" while 'psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles' invite the spirit to the constant memory of virtue by cooling our boiling anger and by extinguishing our lusts"[20]. Similarly the Council *in Trullo* ordered that "there shall in no way be made pictures, whether they are in paintings or in what way so ever, which attract the eye and corrupt the mind, and incite it to the enkindling of base pleasures. And if any one shall attempt to do this he is to be cut off".[21]

Yet, one has to bear in mind that the patristic sources usually referred to the explicit use of indecent images which was well known to the world even in ancient times. The famous wall paintings of Pompei, as eloquent their artistic manner may be, were designed for the sexual arousal of the visitors to the public house. When the problem proved to be a pressing matter, the Quinisext Council *in Trullo* warned the faithful to guard their sight and guide it "towards everything that is good".[22] It is however, rather irrelevant to apply the specific point to western paintings in general even if one admits to a certain immorality in the prevalent nudity and earthliness of forms in Renaissance painting.

The association of artistic experience with a sexual connotation is as common in western and particularly in Freudian thought as much it is in the writings of some Orthodox thinkers. Even though there may be something true about the Freudian notion of an artist

[19] Ibid.
[20] Evagrius, *The Praktikos*, ch. 71, (Bamberger 1972, 35).
[21] Council in Trullo, Canon 100.
[22] Balsamon in Mango 1986, 234.

being an especially wounded personality, nevertheless western art psychology, generally speaking, fell into dissent with the principles of Freudian psychoanalysis over the point of art's libidinous origin often considering the Freudian analysis to be reductivist On the other hand, the writings of Carl Jung inspired many art psychologists through his approval of the role of art, and his belief that the contents of the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious could be accessed by art and other forms of cultural expression. He attempted to implement the method of art therapy for the purpose of "ego-repair".

Otto Rank's immense contribution to the study of art's positive potentials in healing ultimately linked the rationale of art to the search for the eternal on the part of both the artist and the viewer. Rank does not hesitate to criticize the Freudian vision of the sexual origin of all pleasure and instead argues that "Pleasure is not only nourished from positive sources, but may even be just a condition characterized by the absence of fear or guilt".[23] Rank's general formula for his view of aesthetic pleasure, puts pleasure in the context of a broader consciousness of life and death where avoidance of fear acts to enhance pleasurable emotions. Pleasure is associated with the universal quest for ultimate safety, which is above yet includes every kind of delight and satisfaction. This brings Rank to the conclusion that "aesthetic pleasure is not sexual, but ... on the other hand, sexual pleasure may also be termed 'aesthetic' in so far as it is momentary and partial – the two qualities which seem to us to sum up every pleasurable emotional experience".[24] Aesthetic pleasure is a partialization of the universal quest for eternal safety and bliss.

Rank finds only one justification of the Freudian tendency towards the sexualisation of the artistic impulse; he mentions that the will, conscious or unconscious, necessarily expresses the individual, while sexuality refers to sharing in human love-experience; although it is otherwise in perpetual conflict with it. Rank sees the conquest of this conflict in art in a different way: "though closely akin to the individual conquest in love and the collective conquest in religion, it is differentiated from both by a specific element which we may broadly call the aesthetic".[25] Rank turns the aesthetic experience from Freudian libidinousness into a loving experience. This redirection reminds us of the patristic guidance on transforming passions[26] and giving them the right direction towards praising

[23] Rank 1923, 107.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Rank 1923, 85-86.
[26] Maximos, *Philokalia*, Vol, 2, p.179.

the Creator. It also recalls an old image of lovers, who "do not know what they want to thirst for, for they do not think of God himself who yet has mixed in with each creature a secret taste of himself like a sweet fragrance".[27] These interpretations qualify the idea of the sexual origin of art as not defiling but sanctifying as a desire for sharing the love of God with others.

However, in spite of precautions over the subject of the feelings and emotions involved in art, it was precisely in the middle ages when artists began to express what was felt as much as what was seen or known. The earlier Christians saw as distractions not only potentially indecent representations in ecclesiastical painting, but also the preoccupation with the subjects of 'this world' that could easily distract the prayer of the faithful. The 5th century correspondence between St Nilus of Sinai and Prefect Olympiodorus tells us that the state consulted clergy on how to decorate and paint the Church of the Holy Martyrs. The saint finds the realistic depictions of animals and nature as "stucco-work so as to delight the eye in God's house"[28]. In answer to the prefect's query he assumes that it would be childish to distract the eyes of the faithful with the aforementioned trivialities. Instead he proposes to represent a single cross in the sanctuary.[29] Nevertheless, he agrees on painting the church on both sides with pictures from the Old and New Testaments, executed by an excellent painter, so that the illiterate, who are unable to read the Holy Scriptures, may serve the true God by gazing thereupon, and may be roused to emulate the glorious and celebrated feats depicted. The saint considers it sufficient that a venerable cross should be set up in each compartment of the nave, and "whatever is unnecessary ought to be left out".[30] The Byzantine ascetic obviously regards the depictions of the natural world as "unnecessary", unlike the illustrations of Biblical stories and the Holy Cross, and therefore wants them to be excluded from the paintings in the church.

The letter by St Nilus demonstrates that by the 5th century some members of the clergy must have begun to reject the lavish floor and wall mosaics that had been popular decoration for several centuries since its adoption from Roman art. The attitude highlights an age-old dilemma in the Orthodox perception of art which requires a distinction between

[27] Capellanus, *De Amore*, quoted by Balthasar 1991, 254.
[28] St Nillus in Mango 1986, 33.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

the things of primary value that need to be included in the 'visual book' and the unimportant details that distract the mind from prayer.

Apprehension over aesthetic delight is prevalent in ascetic literature even though it could not possibly refer directly to either western or eastern artistic expressions. St Augustine who is even more greatly venerated in the West than he is in the Eastern Church, confessed that he often faced a danger of being carried away by music and art in the church and forgot about the true source of their beauty. St Augustine justly noted that "the eyes love fair and varied forms, and bright and soft colours".[31] The saint exclaimed in apprehension "Let not these occupy my soul; let God rather occupy it, who made these things, very good indeed, yet is He my good, not they".[32] St Augustine took most seriously the over-fascination with music as a major offence against God and the Church. The fear of erring even made him wish "the whole melody of sweet music which is used to David's Psalter, [to be] banished from my [his] ears, and the Church's too".[33] The saint sincerely admitted that the mode seemed to him 'safer'. The feeling was shared by other Church hierarchs like "Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, who made the reader of the psalm utter it with so slight inflection of voice, that it was nearer speaking than singing".[34] Yet, St Augustine is also well aware of the positive potentials of the power of artistic influence if one focuses one's attention on the things that 'are sung' rather than on 'the way they are sung'. He acknowledges the positive outcome of shedding tears while hearing psalmody and acknowledges "the great use of this institution".[35] Thus St Augustine wisely discerns between the "peril of pleasure and approved wholesomeness... that so by the delight of the ears the weaker minds may rise to the feeling of devotion".[36]

The ascetic reservations that some modern Orthodox authors refer to in relation to western art broadly consist of two major points of concern: Western art can arouse the soul and body and it can be distracting from the truth. Yet, one can safely argue that the same danger can be detected in the perception of ecclesiastical or any other art if one's senses are not cultivated properly for the discernment of truth behind every aspect of human existence. The real threat therefore that could derive from the sensual nature of art's appreciation is to

[31] St Augustine, *Confessions*, 10, §51.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Augustine, *Confessions*, 10, §50.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

be found in its power to distract rather than to induce the observer into sin. Even the ascetic movement admired by Orthodox Christian spirituality as Hesychasm preached inner stillness, balance and stability rather than mortification of feelings and especially the one that allows humans to experience the mercy of God, gratitude, love, repentance etc. Feelings that drive man into the realm of the eternal are in fact applauded by the ascetic experience, and regarded as weapons and shields against evil powers. A Christian equipped with spiritual weapons can in fact decode the mystical potentials of artistic experience. It is true that Orthodox theology always prioritizes faith over senses and emotions: "If 'by faith' we discover much more than what can be detected 'by senses', this only discloses the utter inadequacy of 'senses' in the knowledge of spiritual matters".[37] Yet, the Christian concept of deification (*Theosis*) seeks the harmony and unity between soul and body, the wholeness of being, not their separation.

The number of *ekphrases* used in Byzantine sources somehow refers to the possibility that the power of artistic expression might have jeopardized the role of the letter. Asterius of Amaseia's reference to the use of *ekphrasis* points to the rivalry between the power of literary expression and painting. He claims that "men of letters, can use colours no worse than painters do",[38] which implies to a prevalent preference for emotional perception over the rational faculty. The process of visual perception necessarily requires both the sense of sight, which according to John of Damascus is the first among the others[39] and the faculty of the imagination. Porphyry thinks that neither image nor eye cause sight, but the soul itself, for the soul has everything in it and when seeing an image, it recognizes it in itself.[40]

According to St Maximos the person who decides to apprehend the visible world through his intellect contemplates the intelligible world: "He imbues his sense-perception with the *noetic* realities that he contemplates, and informs his intellect with the inner essences of what he perceives with the senses. In various ways he transfers the structure of the *noetic* world to the world of the senses; and conversely he transfers the complex unity of the sensible world to the intellect".[41] By apprehending the sensible world in the *noetic* world, a Christian also perceives the *noetic* world in the sensible world "for he has adeptly

[37] Florovsky 1972, 25.
[38] Asterius of Amaseia in Mango1986, 38.
[39] John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*,1.17.
[40] http://www.philosophy.ru/library/bychkov/xxart.html accessed on 07.12.2007.
[41] Maximus in *Philokalia*, Vol.2, 258.

harnessed his intellect with its archetypes to his sense-perception".[42] The *noetic* element in Christian perception does not expect to visualize the divine but rather it evokes the sense of the eternal presence.

4.2. The ambivalence of the concept of beauty in Orthodox theology

Appreciation of beauty that is the core of every true and authentic art is justly approached with special care among Orthodox Christians. Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia pointed out that "in a fallen world beauty is perilously ambivalent: it is not only salvific but deeply seductive".[43] The power of attraction generated by beauty imposed fatal consequences on humankind at the earliest stage of its existence. Eve was deceived by the delight of the eye.[44] The Book of Wisdom warns against the sense of beauty that can lead one astray from the maker of beautiful things and become a distraction[45]. Contemplation of the beauty of created things leads us to God, 'the author of beauty' yet, certain diversions are commonly observed in the history of humankind. Ascetic literature introduces the side effects of beauty as a possible trap and therefore warns to approach and treat it with special care. The Russian Dostoyevsky profoundly articulated the ambivalence of beauty: "Beauty is not only a terrifying thing – it is also a mysterious one. In it the Devil struggles with God, and the field of battle is the hearts of men".[46] Describing human hearts as a battlefield between God and devil over beauty unconsciously suggests that the power of beauty can jeopardize the fortitude of free will. We may be determined to serve the true God while beauty may cause us to 'go astray', so that we, tranquilized by the delight of the visual appearance of things, no longer take the trouble to seek their maker.

Since prayer is regarded as the highest gift in the Orthodox Christian ascetic tradition, the questions such as these often arise: why do we need to experience the beauty of the visual world whether in nature or in art? Does art only provide an aid to our prayer or is it capable of doing more than merely aid us in our relationship with God? Why is natural beauty not enough and why do we need art to let us contemplate the traces of divine beauty in our material world?

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ware 2008, 7.
[44] Genesis 3:6.
[45] Wisdom 13:1-7.
[46] Dostoyevsky 1982, 131.

The ambivalence of beauty's impact on the human mind concerned the great philosophers of antiquity. Plato was the first philosopher who articulated the meaning of beauty as well as art and its potentials.[47] Yet, his view on the illusionism of the world preconditioned his view on earthly beauty as well The sensual nature of the perception of beauty perplexed Plato who firmly prioritized Self control, morality, ethical discipline, standards and order over sensuality and emotional perception. Yet, as Gombrich shrewdly grasps that "when Plato, in the extant writings, speaks of beauty, he does not speak of art, and where he speaks of art, he never mentions beauty".[48] In the Platonian thought the contemplation of beauty, such as is experienced in love, can lead to the realm of transcendent ideas, while "art can only flatter and deceive the senses and seduce the mind to feed on phantoms".[49]

Plotinus said that grace is superior to beauty, suggesting that beauty without grace "leads those who do not know it far away from the Good like a lover entices his fiancée away from the house of her father".[50] Beauty without grace is incomplete and can only delight the eye without discerning its true source and origin. Plotinus warned against the blinding power of beauty: "Evil is caught in the entangling ropes that form the web of beauty, like a prisoner covered with folded chains. Evil hides in these ropes so that its reality cannot be seen by the gods, so that it is not constantly visible to men".[51] Orthodox theology is also quite aware that God is not the only one who is clothed in beauty: "Even though the truth is always beautiful, beauty is not always true".[52]

The distrust of the perception of beauty was strongly emphasized by early Christian ascetics. The fear of being taken away was so strong among them that their suspicious attitude embraced even the idea of liturgical singing in the Church. Abba Pambo rebuked one of his monks who heard a wonderful singing in the churches of Alexandria and regretted that there was no such singing among the monks in the desert. Abba Pambo in despair prophesized that one day the monks would sing troparia during their services and he wondered - "what kind of contrition does the monk feel, who stands in church or in his cell

[47] Mainly in *Symposium* and *Republic* 10.
[48] Gombrich 2006, 11.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Plotinus, *Enneads* 5, 12.
[51] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 1, 8.
[52] Evdokimov 1972, Ch.3.

and raises his voice like the oxen?"[53] A similar attitude reveals itself in one of the Confessions by St Augustine where he repents his being transported by the beautiful sounds of music. St Augustine favours the practice usually ascribed to Athanasius of Alexandria "who used to oblige the lectors to recite the psalms with such slight modulation of the voice that they seemed to be speaking rather than chanting".[54] St Augustine, unlike Abba Pambo, approves the use of music in liturgy yet, he admits, "when I find the singing itself more moving than the truth which it conveys, I confess that this is a grievous sin, and at those times I would prefer not to hear the singer".[55]

In spite of the early Christian ascetic enthusiasm over adopting the ancient philosophical reservations claiming the seductiveness of beauty, there is enough room in Orthodox tradition for a positive outlook on earthly or material beauty as part of its wider context. Christianity inherited the idea of beauty as related to Eros from Late Antiquity. For Plato Eros was "birth in beauty".[56] The quest for beauty is part of human nature. St Basil points out that "by nature, men desire the beautiful".[57] Irresistible human Eros "launches itself toward the uniquely Desirable One to meet the divine Eros who comes out of himself and unites himself to our spirit".[58] Man, in his essence, is created with a hunger for the beautiful, because his being the 'image of God' and 'of God's race',[59] bounds him to God. It is in being 'in likeness that man manifests the divine beauty".[60] To St Maximus the confessor, the Creator is "the divine Eros" and Christ is "the crucified Eros". St Macarius proclaimed that "the divine Eros brought God down to earth".[61] The patristic use of the term divine Eros implies the excessive and all consuming love of God that cannot be contained, it outflows and embraces the whole cosmos, imbuing it with the majestic beauty of its Creator. "The search for Beauty coincides with the search for the Absolute and the Infinite".[62] Gregory of Nazianzus emphasizes the creative ability of humans as the main ingredient of their beauty: "God has made man the singer of his radiance".[63] Diadochos of

[53] Story narrated by Welleszs 1961, 172.
[54] St Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 10, Chapter 33.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Plato, *Symposium*, 206b7–8, e5.
[57] St Basil, *Regulae fusios tractate*, PG 31, 912 A.
[58] Palamas, from Meyendorff 1974, 178, 212.
[59] Acts, 17:29.
[60] St Gregory of Nyssa, *De opif. homily*, 18 192 CD.
[61] St Macarius, *Homily* 26, 1.
[62] Evdokimov 1972, Ch. 5.
[63] Gregory Nazianzus, PG 38, 1327.

Photiki confirmed that "When grace perceives that we greatly desire the heavenly beauty, it grants us the mark of the likeness".[64] Longing (*eros*) for the Uncreated Beauty unites all created beings, drawing them together into a single coherent and harmonious whole.[65] Playing upon the connection between *kalos* and *kaleo*, Dionysius, influenced by Plato, writes: 'Beauty "calls" all things to itself (whence it is called "beauty") and gathers everything into itself.'[66] Art as a general phenomenon is inherently religious by its ability to point to the divine Eros. Maritain assumes that "ontological" music is "erotic" music" meaning that "it owes its substance to the Eros immanent in being, to that internal weight of desire and regret which all created things bemoan, and that is why such music is naturally religious, and does not entirely waken save under a touch of the love of God".[67]

There is however, a great emphasis on the difference between earthly and divine beauty observed in patristic writings. Christian ascetic tradition developed the way of 'natural contemplation' as a form of ascending to the Creator through contemplating his creation. This 'natural contemplation' however, has two aspects, negative and positive. Evdokimov observed that the Christological tradition of Antioch accentuates the revelation of the Word in his humanity. The pneumatological tradition of Alexandria however, insists on the beauty of the divine. St Cyril of Alexandria makes it clear that the vocation of the Spirit is to be the Spirit of Beauty, the form of the forms. He goes on to say that in the Spirit we participate in the Beauty of the divine nature.[68] The negative side regards all things in this fallen world as deceptive and transitory, and points to the need of reaching out beyond them to the Creator. On the positive side, however, it is to see God in all things and all things in God.[69] Orthodox theology considers two levels of beauty: first, the Divine and Uncreated Beauty, and then the created beauty present in nature and humankind. A famous modern Orthodox theologian assumes that too much stress on the dangers of beauty can also lead astray from seeing its authentic and positive side: "We do better to dwell upon its life-

[64] Diodochos of Photiki, *Sources Cretiennes*, 1955, 149.
[65] Ware 2008, p.11.
[66] Dionysius, *On the Divine Names* 4:7, (Rolt 2004, 96).
[67] Maritain 1954, 69.
[68] Cyril of Alexandria, *On St John, 16*, PG, 464 B.
[69] Ware 2008, 7.

creating potentialities rather than its temptations. It is more interesting to look at the light, not the shadow".[70]

One of the early Christian incidents that can easily illustrate this view takes us back to the Antioch of 341 AD. Bishop Nonnus standing at the Basilica of the blessed Martyr Julian together with seven other Bishops gathered for attending the Synod of Antioch saw a spectacular procession of an Antiochian actress who wore nothing except numerous precious stones and gold. Abba Nonnus called the angry and complaining Bishops to admit their delight honestly pointing out a higher way of appreciating her beauty. He considered that "God has preordained to bring her here into the presence of this worthy and eminent Bishop of Antioch as a judgment on us all personally as much as on our episcopacy".[71] He forced the Bishops to value and appreciate the number of hours that this woman spent on dressing herself in order to meet the expectations of her admirers, which St Nonnus saw as a possible model of Christian self-purification aiming at pleasing the Lord. Bishop Nonnus' creative rhetorical sermon seemed controversial and alien to the Spirit of asceticism in the eyes of the gathered bishops yet as a result of his approach the actress converted to Christianity and was later canonized as St Pelagia for her extremely devote life.[72] In the speech of bishop Nonnus the good potentials of beauty itself presented the positive entity, the seductive dangers of which could only darken those who could not see beyond the shadow.

Evdokimov suggests that "Contemplation of beauty which is strictly *aesthetical*, even a strictly aesthetical contemplation of Christ, is not at all sufficient and requires a religious act of faith, an active participation and incorporation into the transforming beauty of the Lord".[73] He points out the importance of spiritual maturity which grants humans the spirit of discernment "which is itself a faculty that permits the evaluation of values, that distinguishes infallibly not only between good and evil but also between what is beautiful and ugly".[74]

[70] Ware 2008, 8.
[71] *Vitae Patrum*, Life №22, Book 1d, *The Life of St Pelagia the Harlot.*
[72] The story of St Nonnus and Pelagia is retold by West 2003, 171; and Brock 1998, 40.
[73] Evdokimov 1972, Ch.3.
[74] Evdokimov 1972, Ch.3.

The Great Russian thinker summarized the idea of the ambivalence of material beauty: "Ideal content in natural beauty is insufficiently transparent; it does not reveal here all its enigmatic profundity but displays only its general contours, so to speak, in particular concrete phenomena, the most elementary signs and attributes of the absolute Idea".[75] The key to understanding Christian ambivalence over the issue of beauty is that beauty should be admired for the sake of its source and origin that is God himself while admiring beautiful things for their own sake can lead towards worshipping "the creature rather than the Creator".[76]

According to Sherrard we can fulfil a priestly duty in the world only on the condition that our own inner world is 'animated by God'. Sherrard is convinced that the type of perception which enables us to sanctify things is not ours, but only the decision on how to use perception, which depends upon our will. We have the option of turning it "not towards the physical world, but towards God".[77] Sherrard stresses the chief importance of our own agenda in the process of perceiving God. He suggests that "It is only when we can contemplate in ourselves the wisdom of God, the beauty of the poetic essences of the universe, and in their light recognize their counterparts or equivalents hidden beneath the outward appearance of things, that we can reveal to these things their eternal being and bring this being to fruition".[78]

St Augustine claimed that it is not the beauty of bodies, fair harmony of time, the brightness of the light, sweet melodies of varied songs, the fragrant smell of flowers, ointments, spices, manna and honey, or limbs acceptable to embracement of flesh that we love when we love God. And yet, he admitted "I love a kind of light, and melody, and fragrance, and meat, and embracement when I love my God".[79] He identified that element in all things through which we love God as the things existing in our inner selves where there shines unto our souls what space cannot contain, and there sounds what time bears not away, and there smells what breathing cannot disperse, and there tastes what eating cannot diminish, and there clings what satiety cannot divorce. All Orthodox would agree that by loving the true beauty of things we see and cherish our own immortality in it.

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[75] Soloviev 2003, 74.
[76] Romans 1.25.
[77] Sherrard 1990, 13.
[78] Sherrard 1990, 13.
[79] Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 10.

The main stress in the Orthodox Christian appreciation of beauty falls on the consideration of beauty only within the Trinitarian context of truth and goodness. Beauty, truth and goodness form a harmonious entity in Orthodox liturgical and ascetical theology and they cannot be admired separately. Evdokimov perceptively points out that "the perfection of forms is not a stranger to truth and goodness. Is it not the power of Beauty alone that gives Art its transfiguring power?"[80] The authenticity of beauty therefore is to be checked against its unity with truth and goodness. Separation between the three deforms their authentic meaning and introduces the deceptiveness and fake appearance without the presence of real authentic beauty. The unity of the three however, makes beauty "necessary for the fulfilment of the good in the material world, for only by it is the evil darkness of this world illuminated and subdued".[81]

4.3. Defining the line between beauty and ugliness in artistic presentation

Quest for harmony and stability in art often implies to the selective presentation of the beautiful in an artistic form. Contemplating the works by Piet Mondrian,[82] Canaletto's topographical preoccupation with architectural landscapes,[83] or well 'groomed' and 'polished' sculptural forms presented by Classicist painters[84] indicate the deep rooted quest for a certain order in the Creation based on a geometric foundation that even art cannot escape. Father Sergei Bulgakov starts his famous article "The Corpse of Beauty" with following words "The art of Matisse, Gauguin, Cezanne, Renoir, and others is like a brilliant day...",[85] whereas while contemplating Picasso's paintings "the veil of the day with its reassuring multiplicity of colours is blown away, and one is encircled by horrible formless night, full of dumb, evil phantoms and shadows". [86] Yet, the author admits, in spite of the almost demonic unpleasantness coming out of Picasso's paintings, "there is, strangely enough, something of the ikon about it".[87] Bulgakov's observation involves the wider question of what we consider beautiful as opposed to ugliness and what fascinates us when we admire the beauty of one particular artwork, while despising the ugliness of the other. Beauty and the beautiful are key factors in aesthetic appreciation of art. Yet, the mind

[80] Evdokimov 1972, Ch.3.
[81] Soloviev 2003, 69.
[82] Illustration №50.
[83] Illustration №51.
[84] Illustration №52.
[85] Illustrations №53;54;55;56.
[86] Bulgakov 1976, 67.
[87] Ibid.

illumined by the Orthodox Christian liturgical sensibility expects more from art than merely a pretty and pleasant facade. The beautiful appearance of Impressionist paintings easily moves and fascinates. However, not many people tend to consider the content and social context of Impressionist paintings, which did not particularly inspire the reflection of beauty but were meant to expose the evil of the bourgeoisie and to lament the sadness of poverty and hardship. Even though the appreciation quoted earlier admires the gentleness of the Impressionist painters, it also observes the value of paintings by artists such as Bosch,[88] Goya,[89] German expressionists[90] and some others whose sense of beauty does not extol happiness and tranquility. Unpleasant and disturbing images can be powerful and mysterious in spite of their being unwelcome at first sight. Excessive stress on the key role of beauty in artistic presentation ultimately questions the place of the above mentioned artists and makes us wonder: where would the others deprived of happy colours and sunshine stand in the light of Christ? Are they all to be condemned in the face of God as evildoers for creating the works that do not radiate the light and tranquility but shake us to the core with the horror and terror experienced at the sight of the world deprived of beauty?

The Orthodox Christian rationale of beauty necessarily refers to God as its ultimate source and "Originating beauty of everything that is beautiful".[91] God created the world as good and beautiful. The associations of divine and divinity necessarily refer to the connotation of the beautiful, peaceful and good. In Orthodox Christian tradition beauty exists primarily upon three levels: the beauty of nature, the beauty of the angels and the saints, and the beauty of liturgical worship. The notion and experience of blemish came into existence only as a result of the Fall. The Incarnation of Christ aimed at recovering that first-created beauty through the redemptive work of God. Yet, God revealed himself to the world not in his majesty, but rather he took up our wounded state in order to rescue it from the eternal misfortune and recover its original bliss. Therefore all the good things and beautiful things for the fathers of the Church were associated with the way God intended the world to be. Likewise "God's presence among men is what is beautiful, it is this beauty that ravishes and transports men's souls".[92] Dionysios preached that through our Christian life and

[88] Illustration №57.
[89] Illustration №58.
[90] Illustration №59.
[91] Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, 4:7, (Rolt 2004, 96).
[92] Evdokimov 1972, Ch.2.

deification "God allows us to participate in his own beauty"[93] and gives us a chance to contribute to His redemptive work. Theological aesthetics inevitably links beauty with *Theosis*, the process through which human beings strive towards recovering the lost likeness of God in his majestic beauty.

The conventional way of contrasting ugliness with beauty in the modern world is usually based on the consideration of forms and appearances without a reference to their significance and inner meaning. This rather superficial way can be as misleading as the way of admiring beauty for its own sake, against which the early ascetics warned us. The ugly, like the evil, has no substance of its own, it is ultimately produced by the absence of unity between beauty, truth and goodness. Dionysius describes evil as non-existence in itself, because it can have no source, no origin since the Good that is the source of all existed things could not produce its opposite - evil. Therefore he concludes that "evil will be found to be a destructive force in itself, but a productive force through the action of the Good".[94] Evil in the thought of Dionysius causes "no existence or birth but only debases and corrupts"[95] while "the Good, on the other hand, wherever it becomes perfectly present, creates perfect, universal and untainted manifestation of goodness".[96] Likewise, Dionysius considered ugliness as deficiency in form that is not evil itself but rather a 'lesser good'.[97] Dionysius believes that "the complete lack [of the Good] is utterly impotent, and that which is partial hath its power not in so far as it is a lack, but in so far as it is not a perfect lack".[98] As long as there is a seed of true beauty in all things, Dionysius is prepared to consider and admire it.

The common patterns of artistic approaches to beauty and ugliness naturally vary from epoch to epoch. The Renaissance artists were convinced that they brought religious subjects down to earth and made them look real and life-like. Yet, the aim was to copy the external beauty of God's creation: "good painting is nothing but a copy of the perfections of God and a recollection of His painting. It is a music and a melody which only intellect can

[93] Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchies,* III, 11.
[94] Dionysius, *The Divine Names,* 1:5 (Rolt 2004, 60).
[95] Dionysius, *The Divine Names,* 4:20 (Rolt 2004,113).
[96] Ibid.
[97] Dionysius, *The Divine Names,*4:21(Rolt 2004,121).
[98] Dionysius, *The Divine Names,* 4:30 (Rolt 2004, 126).

understand, and that with great difficulty".[99] The eventual infusion of mythological and secular overtones into religious subjects revealed the superficiality of the religious nature of the Renaissance paintings, disclosing the desire for idealization and an escape from the real world instead as its true rationale. The method of selectiveness allowed Italian artists to ignore the flaws of the real world by idealizing the concept of the beautiful and excluding the ugly and the trivial from their paintings. The Renaissance attempted to idealize earthly and material beauty. The theme of pain and sorrow had a strictly religious connotation in a rather humanized version of religious painting in the Renaissance. The only grief that could find a place in art had to be related to a religious thematic, and to the crucifixion in particular. Every single wound and scar was glorified on the dead body of Christ,[100] the sufferings of martyrs were supposed to inspire the faithful to take up the Cross of martyrdom and endure bodily suffering for the sake of salvation. The only justification of suffering in Renaissance art was pointing to a religious purification as a way of cleansing the soul from the custody of the evil associated with bodily passions and sins while the materialism of its presentation did not quite agree with this spirit.

However, this principle proved to be insufficient soon after the Renaissance, when the proto-Renaissance produced mannerism[101] as its heir and the element of poetry suddenly found itself absorbed in the superficial sentimentalism of the Baroque and eventually in Rococo paintings.[102] Painting in Western Europe after the Renaissance continued to claim an amalgamation of poetic nature with natural depiction. The interest in naturalism grew more and more throughout the centuries towards achieving a fullness of expression. The intention to resemble an object was not to be satisfied by merely making the object look like a copy of its original. The visual object itself was seen from different perspectives in different periods including neo-classicist historicism, and the Romantic approach to the past, imbued as it was with nostalgia and melancholy. The French Academia with its excessive stress on metaphor and symbolism loaded into nicely executed and pleasant looking compositions offered a tranquilizing atmosphere in the French salon, where the superficial sense of beauty and prettiness dictated and measured the standards and values of art.

[99] Michelangelo, quoted by Maritain 1954, 24.
[100] Illustration №60.
[101] Illustration №61.
[102] Illustration №62.

The incursion of sentimental and pathetic overtones in naturalistic painting of the Salon between the Renaissance and the emergence of the Realism questioned the authenticity of external beauty even further. Simulated gestures in mannerist paintings lack credibility, yet, the commissioner rarely cared for credibility but expected an immediate emotional effect. The Neo-classicists chose instead a calm expression on faces even in historic scenes of battles, which produced compositions of an equally fake disposition. Painters such as Jacque Louis David[103] aimed at painting in a purely Greek style, rejecting the element of expression and merely describing the event in all its naturalness using the forms and shapes inspired by Greek sculptures. The sentimentalism of mannerism and the cold heroism of neoclassicism instantly deprived their art of art's inherent poetic nature, instead of highlighting it.

Nevertheless, a special respect and care for actual human suffering outside the context of explicitly religious themes in art is observed as early as the emergence of realism in western painting in the 17th century. Interestingly enough it was the genre thematic of Dutch painters, which predicted the potentials of artistic vision, capable of seeing poetic beauty even in the most trivial and prosaic moments of human life. The examples of the tendency towards poeticising the 'banal' is also characteristic of paintings by Vermeer,[104] Rembrandt, Velasquez, Murillio and others who became the inspiration to artists of later generations.

The Protestant stress on caring for the poor caused a great rivalry between the Protestant and Roman Catholic worlds over the issue, a rivalry manifested in the art of the period. Dutch painters presented the hardship of common people and their banal daily chores in a rather undisturbed, peaceful and even intimate manner. Seeing the beggars in the streets of Spain in the 17th century could not leave artists such as Murillo[105] and Velasquez indifferent to their plight. Velasquez went even further and used images of real beggars from the street as models for his portraits of great philosophers, thus attempting at erasing the class stereotype.[106] Rembrandt's sense of beauty embraced even more than issues related to social standing. His gentle and rather caring presentations of the wrinkled hands and faces of the elderly in his portraits, their sad yet profound gazes, the torn and dirty feet

[103] Illustration №63.
[104] Illustration №64.
[105] Illustration №65.
[106] Illustration №66.

of his *Prodigal Son*[107] indicate his pastoral ability to dignify the poor and the resentful. The portraits of elderly people by Rembrandt[108] present people who would never be regarded with the degree of affection and care that these portraits inspire. The 17th century Realist artists demonstrated that the authenticity and genuineness of the banal and prosaic proves to be more beautiful and profound than the fake flavour of the ideal and selective. The true value of real life and real things can only be appreciated if they are approached with love and care, in which case the artists manifest the beauty that is contained by the things that are usually considered as resentful. Gadamer outlined a brief summary of the philosophy behind the artistic presentation of the ugly as beautiful: "Aristotle emphasizes that artistic representation even makes the unpleasant appear as pleasant, and for this reason Kant defined art as the beautiful representation of something, because it can make even the ugly appear beautiful".[109] Aristotle as part of his theory on art as a way of portraying not what has happened but what might have happened praises the artists "who reproduce the distinctive features of a man, and at the same time, without losing the likeness, make him handsomer than he is".[110] In the case of the above mentioned artists we might conclude that what makes their unprepossessing images rather handsome is the artist's ability to point to their inner dignity and looking at them through the eyes of compassion and even of pastoral care.

The quest for genuine expression in the context of beauty versus ugliness developed even further in Western Europe at the end of the following century. The freedom-loving spirit of creativity forced modern artists to march against any expression of industrialism and dull academism as the manifestations of death and ugliness. Courbet's Pavilion of realism became a marker of a dramatic change in the character of art as well as in its understanding. Courbet bravely marched against the hypocrisy of tranquilizing prettiness, and the vulgarity and dullness of academism.

The artistic imitation of the real proposed a different vision of the real world, with no tendency towards idealization but more valuing and appreciating the archetypal significance of every single being. The flaws in realist paintings began to be appreciated

[107] Illustration №4.
[108] Illustration №67.
[109] Gadamer 2004, 113.
[110] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 15, 1454b.

almost like scars maintaining different stories behind them. The Realist painters' beliefs were reflected in the ideology of the Russian writer Chernyshevsky, who argued that beauty is contained exclusively in real life, and thus in reality. Reality is more perfect than imagination. Art according to Chernyshevsky not only imitates reality, but also explains and evaluates it.[111] Likewise, Maritain's observation explains more eloquently the power of influence that realist paintings generate: "A totally perfect finite thing is untrue to the transcendental nature of beauty. And nothing is more precious than a certain sacred weakness, and that kind of imperfection through which infinity wounds the finite".[112]

In spite of all the due admiration given to Impressionist paintings in our times, one should mention that the same paintings were the targets of endless mockeries and condemnations in the time when they were first exhibited. What the modern Orthodox theologian of the 20th century found beautiful was condemned as ugly, vulgar and ridiculous by the aesthetes and moralists of France in the end of the 19th century. Once it was Manet's *Breakfast on the Grass*[113] that shocked the bourgeois who were accustomed to taking pleasure from contemplating nudity presented exclusively in a mythological and 'unreal' setting. His *Olympia*[114] was also no longer either Titian's Venus, or a nude nymph with closed eyes pleasing the desires and passions of the bourgeois men under the cover of mythology. The presentation of an actual courtesan, exposing the immorality of her male spectators by her direct eye contact did not please the hypocritical standards of modern society. The peak of the contemporary condemnation of Manet's *Olympia* has been most evidently expressed through the epithet of 'female Gorilla'.[115] Nevertheless the theme of prostitutes was taken further by the Impressionist Degas[116] and Postimpressionist Toulouse Lautrec[117] since the theme best expressed the hypocritical spirit of the society while showing deep compassion and care for the poor who were forced into an indecent way of life.

Realism as a movement in art had its followers in rather different and unusual ways. Naturalistic painting was greatly discredited since the Impressionists abandoned the French Academy and Salon. The beauty of real expression was to be found in optical impression as

[111] Chernyshevsky, periphrased by Tatarkiewicz 2011, 280.
[112] Maritain 1954, 167.
[113] Illustration №23.
[114] Illustration №22.
[115] Amedee Cantaloube, *Le Grand Journal*, June, 1865.
[116] Illustration №68.
[117] Illustration №69.

well in expression of the truth for the sake of improving the world. The Impressionists juxtaposed the beauty of the natural world in all its dynamism, revealed in changing colours at every turn of the sunshine, with the ugliness of society's standards and stereotypes clothed in the apparel of visual beauty.

Realism as a movement also had serious opponents: The fear of the real as opposed to the beautiful forced the writers such as Charles Baudelaire in France and Oscar Wilde in England to challenge the theoretical justifications for realism in art and literature at the end of the 19th century. They argued that the true aim of art is beauty, not the reproduction of reality. In a world where ugliness seemed on the rise, and beauty increasingly in retreat, they saw realism as a betrayal of art itself.

Even though we might discern some cloudiness in the concept of realism on the part of the aforementioned writers, yet, Baudelaire and Wilde might also be seen as prophets of the future cataclysms that took place later in Modernism of the 20th and 21st centuries. The ultimate change that modernity brought about for art is that it replaced the cult of beauty by the cult of absolute freedom – there is no censure, no 'what art is' or 'should be'. Anybody is free to produce a piece of work or even perform a certain action and call it art.

Courbet planned a revolution and Manet violated a taboo by allowing female nudity to be reproachful and to condemn the hypocrisy of the age. The tendency towards painting modern life necessarily contained a political element even though the political resistance itself concealed moralistic overtones under the apparel of realism. The revolutionary Courbet introduced a kind of shock-therapy in art, which was developed by following generations. A political agenda lies also behind Gauguin's poetic exoticism: "Disgusted as he was by the conventions of the West, he wished to confront the world as the savage who had discovered an untarnished civilization in the South Sea isles".[118] The quest for shock went even further in the art of Picasso, German Expressionists and a few others who tried to respond to the horror of the modern world, in which human vices such as hatred, cruelty and injustice were supported and empowered by industrial and technical progress. Picasso's *Guernica*[119] does not pretend to show the world in beautiful colours. It conveys the terror

[118] Gombrich 2006, 214.
[119] Illustration №70.

and dread of the war. *The Crucifixion*[120] by Emil Nolde does not stand anywhere near the pretty Renaissance paintings of the athletic body of ChriSt The Nolde's Christ is dead and the responsibility for it falls on the abuse of human free will. The same tragedy of modernity was powerfully expressed earlier by Munch in his *The Scream*[121] of the modern man who cannot take any more cruelty, aggression and terror.

A certain perplexity is observed in Modern art since the end of the 21st century when individualism in artistic expression took over and *épatage* almost turned into a movement. The stranger the piece of work is, the more it is taken as a clear example of contemporary art that sees its main goal as to shock and challenge the modern world by exhibiting something bizarre. Yet, modern authors of installations often forget that it has become almost impossible to shock the modern man in the age of technical civilization, when human sensitivity has been consumed by the chaos of virtual communications whether on social networks or 3D technologies. It has become particularly challenging in the era of technical civilization to create something so strange that would pull anybody out of the frames of global indifference.

Tracey Emin's famous controversial installation "My Bed"[122] went as far in its attempt to shock the world as exhibiting publicly the artist's own unmade bed pretending to be sharing the most intimate space with observers and leaving herself vulnerable to their judgment. The ultimate artistic value of the work stems from the piece of information we obtain from the title telling us that the bed belongs to the artist herself. Therefore, it is meant to be chaotic and messy, implying to the nature of the artistic personality that is predestined to be rebellious and free from earthly concerns. However, considering the other paintings of artists' beds by Delacroix[123], Van Gogh[124], Maggie Siner[125]… one can easily question the artistic origin of the Tracey Emin's famous bed since it does not give the viewer a chance to make a comparison between the real thing and its artistic presentation. Besides the aesthetic value, the difference between the conceptual standards of Tracey Emin's bed and the beds painted by others is that the first one displays the bed as it is while the others

[120] Illustration №71.
[121] Illustration №72.
[122] Illustration №73, first exhibited at Tate Gallery in 1999 and sold for 4 million US Dollars at Christie's auction house in 2014.
[123] Illustration №74.
[124] Illustration №75.
[125] Illustration №76.

communicate the artists' visions of the beds and the fundamental significance they give them and share. One might be moved by seeing somebody else's personal belongings that speak of the person's character and lifestyle. Yet, there is nothing particularly artistic about sharing one's most intimate physical space with others. The real artistic sharing is to be found in sharing the vision, values and beliefs, for which the artist needs to let his imagination employ appropriate mimetic tools and methods. One may wonder if that which displays a combination of objects, devoid of any attempt to demonstrate their eternal bliss, or to transform the banal into an entity bearing a seal of the eternal, can be considered art in any sense. Venerating the trivial for its own sake is neither the rationale of art nor it is part of the Christian lifestyle. The neglect for credibility and the power of expression becomes an obstacle in the viewer's attempt to share the artist's inner space, which is much more intimate a realm than one's bed can claim. Installations such as this are destined to remain as mere facts that took place in the history of modern Western European art, yet the manner of their artistic presentation can hardly compete with the masterpieces of western art for their lack of vitality and creative wisdom. Even though the idea of *épatage* in art has a noble aim to march against society's escapism and preference for blind tranquillity, it is also open to misuse as a claim and pretence without a firm foundation. The fight against the evil of modern society may unintentionally be employing the same tools of hatred, disrespect and aggression that can hardly lead to the transformation of the real into the eternal. Sharing the view of the real object is simple and easy, "But the mystery is to share in the creation of form by pressing forward to the seal of mystery".[126]

Looking at modern art from an Orthodox theological point of view, one may conclude that transforming the limited and wounded into the beautiful constitutes the rationale of every true art. As early as ancient Rome the difference between the pretty and the beautiful was known: Cicero made a distinction between the prettiness that has an immediate impact and true and authentic beauty that lasts forever, even if it does not appear beautiful at first sight: "But though they captivate us at first sight the pleasure does not last, while the very roughness and crudity of old paintings maintains their hold on us".[127] Likewise, the Sinai icon of *the ladder of the Divine Ascent*[128] does not precisely express beauty but rather

[126] Klee 1961, 60.
[127] Cicero, De Oratore, III, xxv.98. quoted by Gombrich 2006, 7.
[128] Illustration №77.

inspires horror of the bitter truth on the way to salvation "For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it".[129] Facing hardship naturally introduces anxiety and panic in the mind of every human being. Yet, the artistic response to the bitter truth and its creative representation is supposed to be somewhat elevating precisely by unveiling the glimpse of beauty in every misery and sorrow that captivates our minds and allows our sensibilities to enshrine the eternal kingdom. Manuel Chrysoloras in his epistle eloquently describes the difference between our perception of the real thing and its artistic presentation: "We do not pay much attention to the graceful curve of a bird's beak or to the hoof of a live horse; but when the mane of a bronze lion is beautifully spread out, when the leaves of a stone tree show their ribs, when the leg of a statue suggests the sinews and veins upon the stone – this we find pleasing".[130] The reason for this, he continues, is that "in images we are admiring the beauty not of bodies, but of the maker's mind".[131] The materials that belong to the realm of the fallen and wounded world transform into the means of preaching eternity in the hands of the artist St Gregory the Theologian articulated the creative process in following words: "It is, after all, very much within the skill of the craftsman if he should adapt the occasional disorder and unevenness of the material realm to achieve the purpose of his creation: and this will be grasped and acknowledged by all of us when we contemplate the final, perfect beauty of what he has created".[132] The artist's archetypal vision of the world and its authenticity communicates the sense of beauty that makes even the ugly look beautiful and allows it to tell us about the greater reality.

4.4. Catharsis in art: purgation through beauty and through pain

The previous section demonstrated that beauty in art can be discerned in beautiful appearances as much as in the presentation of horror and even ugliness. One might wonder what exactly alarms us when we encounter disturbing images in the masterpieces of western art and how do we respond to the artistic presentation of tragedy and sorrow?

The eastern and western Christian dialogue about the role of the senses in the appreciation of art is largely based on the Platonic and Aristotelian debates over the subject. Whereas

[129] Matthew 7:14.
[130] Manuel Chrysoloras, Epist 3, PG 156, 57 ff, quoted by Mango 1986, 255.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Gregory of Nazianzus, OR. 14-31.

Plato imagines emotion in the audience as an imitation of the emotions depicted on the stage, Aristotle describes imitation as a mode of psychological identification. The effects of fear and pity that we experience in the theatre are genuine, though they differ from the effects of these emotions in daily life. In real life we might run away from something we fear, or offer help to an object of pity thus finding a rational solution to what is happening. Yet theatrical mimetic presentation offers us a chance of turning the negative experience into an act of cultivating the sense of sympathy as a way of inner purification.[133] While for Plato mimesis arouses emotions that would best be suppressed, Aristotle by contrast claims that tragedy can lead to the 'purgation' (catharsis) of emotions.[134] As much as pity demands both sympathy and moral judgement, so fear demands imagination and self-reflection on even disturbing sights; tragedy in particular produces emotional effects of pity and dread that cause the proper purification of these emotions. Mimesis in tragedy from an Aristotelian perspective is therapeutic rather than constituting a deficiency.

When considering the cathartic effects produced in human psyche by the contemplation of the artistic presentation of tragedy, we may argue that it is not as much the theme itself as the power of expression that does not leave us untouched and indifferent. Tragedy, like ugliness as a fact is neither pleasurable nor elevating, while the artistic presentation of it gives it a universal meaning. Soloviev says that "The spiritual light of the absolute ideal, refracted by the imagination of the artist, illuminates dark human reality but does not at all change its essence".[135] If the artist decides to display and represent the tragic event in an artistic form, it means that the artistic representation expects a response. If Shakespeare's characters show their devastation it follows that the spectators are going to make a fair judgement and pity them. If Munch's character is screaming, there has to be a hope for greater help. Presentation of the ugly or the tragic expects a ray of hope within the negative response of the spectator. Ugliness and injustice provoke a protest in the observer – the spectator knows what is wounding the world without which we are supposed to live in eternal happiness. Ultimately the woundedness and pain let us feel our own humanity in a

[133] Aristotle, *Poetics,* Chapter 6, 1449b.
[134] Aristotelian concept of catharsis found diversity of interpretations in western thought; Berney formulated the interpretation of catharsis as "purgation" or "purification", Bernays, 1880, Leon Golden challenged the Bernay's view and proposed his interpretation of catharsis as "intellectual clarification", See Golden 1973, 473-479. Lessing considered *catharsis* to be: "the transformation of passions into virtuous habits", see Lessing, 1962,193. Potolsky argues that the most common use of the word in ancient Greece implies to ritual purification or medical purge. See Potolsky 2006, 46.
[135] Soloviev 2003, 80.

more global way by making us feel embraced by humankind who share the same values with us: longing for justice, truth and prosperity. In fact, the artistic presentation of tragedy is a reverse way of affirming the world without pain and sorrow but the decision is left for the viewer to make.

The power of artistic expression that turns artworks into masterpieces induces and obliges us to share the emotional atmosphere of the picture. We feel Induced and manipulated into the artistic approach to the subject. We feel obliged to care - the commitment naturally frightens every human being who prefers to enjoy personal space full of peace and tranquillity. Looking at the unnerving reminders of death in Bosch's paintings, the prostitutes in Lautrec's paintings, *the Scream* by Munch, the disturbing honesty of Picasso's rage or the panicky settings of German expressionists does not leave our conscience at peace. We are called to take an action against the injustice of this world even if this action means not more than raising ourselves above fallen human values by the purification of our own conscience. Ultimately in the back of our minds as Christians we are faced with what went wrong as a result of the Fall and the true masterpiece convinces us that we share the responsibility with everyone else.

Yet a truly great masterpiece always leaves the spectator with the sense of hope which introduces catharsis as a retrospective factor in art. It does not emerge immediately but only after contemplating an artwork from the beginning to the end and after making deep and profound connections. This process may more easily be applicable to cinema that develops over time. Yet, the contemplation of paintings also requires time for digesting all the information. We look at and read a painting from the surface to the intellectual depths and start making connections after which the sense of hope usually arrives as a form of spiritual nourishment. The feeling of hope may not even be suggested by the author, but may be felt as a concluding judgment which is left for the observer to complete. The same sense of hope emerges in a form of faith which shapes one's openness to the greater truth "Beauty makes things and persons transparent".[136]

The longing for goodness, justice and truth that one experiences while contemplating an artwork that presents as subjects pain and sorrow, purifies one's soul as much as contemplation of beauty and goodness. The search for the good expressed through poetry is

[136] Ware 2008, 17.

the equivalent to one's prayer for salvation while "sin kills poetry also".[137] St Teresa of Avila said that "without poetry life would not be tolerable even for contemplatives"[138] with the reference to beauty as its main ingredient. It is worth remembering a story of a Greek Athonite hermit, whose cell was at the top of a cliff facing westward across the sea. The elder used to sit each evening on his balcony, watching the setting sun before going to the chapel for the nightly vigil. One day a young disciple asked him what was the point in looking at the same view every evening. The old man replied, 'I am gathering fuel".[139] Discerning God's presence in nature was stimulating his spiritual perception and readiness to see God in his own heart: "By observing the beauty of the sunset, he was 'gathering fuel', collecting material, to sustain him in the secret exploration that he was soon to undertake. Such, then, was the pattern of his spiritual journey: through the creation to the Creator, from 'physics' to 'theology', from 'natural contemplation' to the contemplation of God".[140] Beauty, truth and goodness season the world as salt and enlighten it like the burning bush, "this beauty leads to hell where it meets Christ and hears his message of victory over death".[141]

Catharsis experienced during the contemplation of beauty in artworks or during the creative process was seen as a model for catharsis and self-purification both in antiquity and by the Church Fathers. Plotinus taught: "Go back into yourself and look. If you do not yet see yourself as beautiful, then be like a sculptor, making a statue that is supposed to be beautiful, who removes a part here and polishes a part there so that he makes the latter smooth and the former just right until he has given the statue a beautiful face".[142] In the same way he suggests making corrections and improving things in our soul, and never to stop 'working on your statue' until the divine splendour of virtue shines in you, until you see self-control enthroned on the holy seat".[143]

[137] Maritain 1945, 28.
[138] quoted by Maritain 1945, 52.
[139] Ware 2008, 8.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Evdokimov 1972, Ch.5.
[142] Plotinus, *Enneads*, I, VI, 9.
[143] Ibid.

Likewise, St John Chrysostom compares the artistic creative process to spiritual perfection and calls for employing the artistic method of perfecting the form as a model for spiritual perfection by "correcting their mistakes and transposing what had been done faultily".[144]

Correcting faults and mistakes is the rationale of catharsis and appears as the chief guide for art whether in selective presentation of beauty or showing beauty through ugliness. The sense of beauty links the human psyche with the divine realm and "redeems from clay the visitations of the divinity in man"[145] in poetry and art. Both the western and eastern art-worlds are familiar with the notion of beauty as "a visitor from the other world".[146] The scepticism over the Prince Myshkin's idea about the salvific nature of beauty obviously derives from the fact that salvation is only in the hands of God and nothing else can save us except God Himself. Yet, the redeeming power of beauty largely falls into the hands of the appreciator as well as the artist since beauty is one of the energies of God, as is goodness and peace, employing it for the purpose of transforming things into their archetypal goodness, for the purpose of spiritual purification and deification means saying 'yes' to God in His attempt to save us. For an Orthodox Christian beauty is found beyond the visual appearance. The Beautiful that the Orthodox Christians appreciate "are beautiful not with a sensual or carnal beauty, not with a beauty assessed by secular 'aesthetic' criteria, but with a *noetic* or spiritual beauty".[147]

Every credible artistic expression of the truth sheds light on the beauty of God's creation that continues to be beautiful in spite of the effects of the Fall and our own sinfulness. Any artwork that purifies our souls and sharpens our spiritual senses evidences that "Even now beauty is saving the world, and it will always continue to do so".[148] What we face in every expression of heart-shaking manifestations of truth and beauty are the traces of the beauty of God. For it is "the beauty of a God who is totally involved in the pain of the world that He has made, of a God who died on the Cross and on the third day rose victorious from the dead".[149] In the world where we are detached from the realm of the other world, we cannot glance the divine beauty directly, we need to contemplate the traces of eternal beauty, that

[144] St John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminados catech. II*, quoted by Mango 1986, 47.
[145] Shelley, quoted by Maritain 1954, 276.
[146] Scrutton 2009.
[147] Ware 2008, 8.
[148] Ware 2008, 14.
[149] Ibid.

shines through the masterpieces made by the artistic sensitivity to beauty and truth. Kallistos Ware summarises that "Beauty brings God to us, and us to God; it is a two-way door of entry".[150] Beauty that generates sanctification and healing is "endowed with sacramental power, acting as a vehicle of God's grace".[151] That perception and appreciation of beauty is truly salvific and make the Dostoyevskian claim true that "beauty will save the world".

4.5. The Orthodox Christian merits of taste in regard to the western artistic perception of beauty

Ouspensky's definition of aestheticism as 'the plague of our times'[152] finds its explanation in the Orthodox reserve about considering the individual vision as a judge of merit, whether in aesthetics or in any other area. St John of Damascus feared that "If each person could act according to his desire, little by little, the entire body of the Church would be destroyed".[153] St Gregory of Nazianzus proclaimed likewise: "I pray God as not to think or to pronounce on Him, as did Solomon, anything which comes from me personally".[154] Therefore, Ouspensky suggests that the type of aesthetic taste, which in itself is a subjective and changeable concept, cannot be regarded as a criterion in the appreciation of sacred images either.

In Western Aesthetics the subjectivity of individual taste in general is never denied: our aesthetic response to an artwork varies from person to person and from painting to painting. There can be as many ways of appreciating or seeing the work of art as there are people who see it. Clive Bell suggests that: "the starting point of all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion".[155] Yet the subjective taste is founded on whether we like the painting or find it disagreeable. A confident judgement of taste however, refers to judging whether the painting stands up to the universal standards of beauty whether we personally like it or not.

The democratic elements in the art of different ages posed an interesting question: is art supposed to address the educated elite alone or is it for everyone? Socialist realism in the

[150] Ware 2008, 18-19.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ouspensky 1978, 17.
[153] St John of Damascus, 3.41.
[154] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 20*, Ch.5.
[155] Bell 1949, 6.

Soviet Union endowed art with the task of addressing all people and educate them in Communist ideology.[156] Likewise, the Pop-Art[157] movement emerged in Western Europe and America in 1950s, engaging imagery from popular culture and thus opening art to the embrace of the common people with no special education in art history. As a reaction against democratizing art, Clement Greenberg encouraged abstract expressionism[158] as a different version of art that developed the notorious concept of 'art for art's sake' by suggesting that art is supposed to express the spirit of modernity in a way that is understandable only to educated and refined minds. Such an elitist view might have been rather extreme, yet the notion of an intellectual prerequisite for contemplating art was not alien even to the ancient world. Aristotle believed that art had to address good taste and not aim to please everyone. He assumed that "If the less vulgar is higher, and the less vulgar is always that which addresses the better public, an art addressing any and every one is of a very vulgar order. It is a belief that their public cannot see the meaning unless they add something themselves, that causes the perpetual movements of the performers".[159] The fulfilment of art happens through the adequate response of the viewer who is required to have a taste and a sensibility for the good. Setting a prerequisite of taste for an observer might imply an elitist tendency of including only a certain class of society in the audience for art. In fact it was the educated, social elite in Parisian Salon that showed the taste for sugar-coated prettiness instead of authenticity and honesty. They, not the lower classes, were then the espousers of artistic vulgarity. The other problem with the paintings produced by artists working at the French Academy of the time was precisely the requirement of dishonesty. Even the great masters of the time were induced into the practice of pleasing the public, which deprived their art of genuine expression and honesty. Any attempt to please the taste of viewers instead of sharing a genuine and experience with them is likely to end in a dull and soulless piece merging with kitsch. Great works of art "possess an appeal that is both timeless and cross-cultural".[160]

When the revolutionary reaction against academism exploded in the form of a realist painter's manifesto, the objection was made to the ugliness of the soulless paintings

[156] Illustration №78.
[157] Illustration №79.
[158] Illustration №80.
[159] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 26, 1462a.
[160] Whewell, entry on "taste", Cooper & Hopkins 1995, 416.

displayed at the Parisian Salon. The same paintings were admired as beautiful by the upper class bourgeois whose members even fainted out of excitement at the sight of their 'beauty'. The reaction against fake prettiness confirmed Cicero's point about the resentfulness of excessive sweetness. Cicero asserted that even though "taste is the most pleasure-loving of all the senses and more easily attracted by sweetness than the others", the taste for saccharine prettiness has a short-term effect and "quickly it rejects and dislikes anything extremely sweet… thus in all things disgust borders immediately upon pleasure".[161] The Realist's protest against the standard of beauty prevalent at the French Academy was derived not as much from a personal dislike of the Realists and then the Impressionists, but it objected the fact that the taste for the beautiful was grossly violated by the quest for adjusting to the fashion dictated by the upper class. Realists attacked the social hypocrisy that artists tried to please and satisfy.

Western philosophy agrees on one point that "there is no such thing as natural good taste. All taste has to be acquired, so that to some extent our aesthetic preferences are a product of our training and upbringing, in which we come under social and educational pressures to admire what others admire".[162] Diotima says that when someone makes a contact with the beautiful "he conceives and gives birth to what he has been carrying inside him for ages. And whether they are together or apart, he remembers that beauty".[163] It could even be said that it becomes part of him and participates in shaping his worldview. Consideration of the diversity of exemplars of beauty enriches one's taste, which lets one make a competent judgment on what is truly beautiful, and what merely displays a pretty appearance. Tarkovsky noted that after seeing a truly great work of art one cannot remain the same as one was before. The transformation of a human being that takes place as a result of artistic influence includes the cultivation and refinement of the taste for the good. Therefore good taste and bad taste in western aesthetics refers not to what people like or whether they prefer one painting over the other or one style over the other but rather to the ability of discerning and admiring features, elements, skills and methods that are worth admiring. What one likes or dislikes is a matter of personal taste, while discerning and asserting the

[161] Cicero, III, xxv.98, quoted by Gombrich 2006, 27.
[162] Whewell, entry on "taste", Cooper & Hopkins 1995, 417.
[163] Plato, *Symposium*, 209c.

eternal value in the work of art is a matter of good taste which derives from the cultivated skills of observation.

Every artistic movement in every epoch responded to the spirit of the era. Maritain discerned that "What makes modern painting (I am not speaking about abstract art) singularly dear to us, is the fact that its means are incomparably appropriate for the liberation of the poetic sense".[164] Yet, in our modern times besides the prevalent 'shock-oriented' installations it is precisely the absence of one movement that would unite artistic interests into a group expresses the spirit of the pluralistic age, which is dominated by concerns for individualism and democracy. The uniting element in modern art can be found in its excessive search for the spiritual – the attempt to liberate oneself from the custody of virtual technology, the pursuit of financial security and material prosperity. Ouspensky notes that on the spiritual level even the "struggle against God, whether open or secret, leads paradoxically to faith. Fragmentation and disintegration lead to a quest for unity; the false and the artificial, to a taste for what is authentic".[165] Even the most bizarre performances at the galleries of the 21st century attempt to point to the importance of inner freedom even if their artistic expressions are not at all as powerful as Orthodox icons or even the masterpieces of western art of different centuries.

It is not a coincidence that the quest for dematerializing and abstracting was characteristic of the declining stages of almost every period in art history. Michelangelo's sculptures of slaves can serve as an example of the Renaissance man's consciousness of rising above matter and seeking freedom from the limits set by it. However, the desire to 'break the mirror' and produce something beyond it is not only a result of fascination with inner reality. The very tendency towards turning inwards cannot be understood outside the socio-historical context of the time. The 20th century saw two world wars and a rather speedy advancement of industrialism followed by the progress of technical civilization. Umberto Eco saw science as driving the worldview of an age since "Contemporary art makes the new scientific paradigm seem normal by expressing it in culture".[166] The spiritual crisis of modernity hardly inspired artists to paint the beauty of the world. Abstractionist artists as well as German expressionists saw their own art as a response to the state of a world full of

[164] Maritain 1954, 270.
[165] Ouspensky 1992, 478-479.
[166] Eco 1989, 90.

violence, horror and misery. Paul Klee assumed that "the more horrifying this world becomes, the more art becomes abstract; while a world at peace produces realistic art".[167] No wonder that the artistic experiments brought about abstract art in the 20th century that expressed the motion of inner reality through the combination of colours and lines without reference to material objects. Even though the legacy of the past proved that it is perfectly possible to capture the inner meaning of things through the visual depictions of material objects, contemporary artists often see their absence as a sign of spiritual freedom. If modern abstract art divorces itself from the Things of Nature, it is with a view to being more fully true to the free creativity of the spirit, that is to poetry, and therefore to tend toward beauty, the end of poetry, in a manner more faithful to the infinite amplitude of beauty".[168]

4.6. A modern Orthodox Christian understanding of the concept of aesthetic taste

As already stated, the concept of aesthetic taste and its western interpretation presents one of the challenges to the Orthodox vision of western art. Pavel Florensky spoke about "Orthodox taste", which as "Orthodox temper, is felt but is not subject to arithmetical calculation. Orthodoxy is shown, not proved. That is why there is only one way to understand Orthodoxy: through direct experience".[169] This also explains why Orthodox scholars when they speak of understanding icons not on a visual but on a spiritual level, can never fully articulate their meaning. The flavour of the Orthodox Christian Tradition is natural and essential to those who live in it. For example, Florensky argues that the impossibility of using an organ in the Orthodox Liturgy "arises directly from our sense of taste, completely apart from any theoretical considerations, because the sounds of instrumental music conflict in our consciousness with the whole style of the Orthodox services, breaking apart their self-integrated wholeness, even if we consider the services as merely artistic unities".[170] One who has been moved by the sound of organ playing Bach's music might find Florensky's view disquieting and even offensive. Yet, the truth is that though the Orthodox liturgical service does not leave room for including any instrument in its services, yet it has no reason to condemn Bach's music in general. The beautiful things that are not part of the Orthodox Liturgical tradition do not lose their beauty, but they

[167] Klee 1968, Entry 951.
[168] Maritain 1954, 216.
[169] Florensky 1997, 8–9.
[170] Florensky 1996, 100.

cannot be embraced by the Tradition which has a clearly defined set of forms following the same line. It has to be noted that the "Orthodox Taste" involves a variety of cultural tastes as well. Greek, Russian, Georgian, Romanian, Bulgarian traditional autocephalous Churches introduce a wide variety of traditional cultural identities and tastes within Orthodoxy. The diversity within one faith is united in a common principle – Glorifying God in the Apostolic spirit of the Conciliarity (Sobornost) of the Church preserved by the Fathers in the name of the Tradition. Ouspensky likewise argues that the Church is guided by only one criterion: Orthodoxy. The question it asks is not whether an artwork is beautiful, inspiring or pleasant, but it asks "Is an image Orthodox or not? Does it correspond to the teaching of the Church or not? Style as such is never an issue in worship"[171]. The Great Russian Theologians articulated the sense of taste in Orthodox tradition as a defender of the tradition and faith - something that has been guarding the tradition of the church and preserved its Spirit. Ouspensky suggested that taste, which itself is a subjective and changeable concept cannot be regarded as a criterion in the appreciation of a sacred image.[172] Yet, the taste which preserves the tradition intact within the church is guided by the refined sensibility for truth and authenticity even in the world outside the church.

The Orthodox Christian aesthetic perception is not quite the same as what Kant suggested by 'disinterested' judgment. The ascetic element of the Orthodox faith obliges a Christian to deny his own egoistic self for the sake of truth. So his interest is not absent but it is directed towards Christ and this direction conditions his taste for beauty, truth and goodness. The criterion for the Orthodox Christian while contemplating icons is to consider their faithfulness to the tradition, while the criterion in appreciation of western art should be a consideration of how powerfully the truth, beauty and goodness that are presented by the artwork reveal and take our attention to their eternal value and their origin. The ways of achieving this power are as different as the modes of perceiving them. Yet, the Orthodox Christian taste for the eternal is cultivated and nurtured by Liturgical consciousness and sensibility. An Orthodox Christian sees everything truly beautiful in the world as an element that integrates all things into the same truth that Orthodox Christian faith worships and venerates. The apprehension of beauty, "whether divine or created,

[171] Ouspensky 1978, 15.
[172] Ouspensky 1978, 17.

involves much more than our subjective 'aesthetic' preferences. On the level of the Spirit, the beautiful coexists with the True".[173]

Even though the question of taste is usually qualified as individual and subjective, the Orthodox never denied that beauty invokes our adequate response. The fervent desire for the beautiful in patristic terms is equal to the desire for embracing God, who is the source of beauty and is clothed in it. It is not a coincidence that the collection of ascetical works compiled later by St Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth is called *Philokalia*, the literal meaning of which is 'the love of beauty'. The Greek word for 'beautiful', *kalos*, also has a connotation of 'good', as does the word *agathos*. Plato noted that *kalos* in the sense of the "beautiful" is related etymologically with the verb *kaleo*, meaning 'I call' or 'summon', 'I invoke' or 'evoke'.[174] Metropolitan Kallistos asserts that it "is the special characteristic of beauty: it calls out to us, it beckons to us and draws us to itself. It takes us out of ourselves and brings us into relationship with the Other… Within each one of us there lies a nostalgia for beauty, a longing for something hidden deep within our unconscious, known to us long ago yet at the present moment somehow just outside our grasp".[175] Dionysius affirms that "the Beautiful is the same as the Good" as the causation.[176] Therefore, beauty together with the good links the two worlds – this world and the world beyond. The earliest extant example of conversion to the Christian faith for the beauty of its worship has been recorded in the Russian Primary Chronicle about the newly converted Russians in the 10th century. The envoys of Prince Vladimir of Kiev experienced something unusual in the great Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople: 'For on earth there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men… For we cannot forget that beauty'.[177] The taste for the good and beautiful is naturally present in every human being who observes Christ in beauty as a foundation of his inner transformation. Orthodox Christians would agree with Edgar Allan Poe's definition of the sense of the beautiful as "An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man".[178] The traces of eternal beauty that we see in this

[173] Ware 2008, 18.
[174] Plato, *Cratylus* 416c.
[175] Ware 2008, 9.
[176] Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, 4:7 (Rolt 2004, 97).
[177] *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 111.
[178] Poe, quoted by Maritain 1954, 200.

world cannot be neglected and devalued for their omission from Orthodox liturgical tradition.

Yet there is a certain tendency towards linking Orthodox art with modern western art on the grounds of the Western search for dematerialization in abstract paintings. Some believe that by grasping the invisible, the abstractionist painters share the spirit of iconography. An interesting discovery of the conscious employment of iconographic structure in Albert Gleize's paintings[179] reveals the artist's admiration for Orthodox iconography.[180] Some Orthodox are even keen to see something iconic in Mark Chagall's deliberate choice of a primitive style.[181] The western modernists' desire to go back to spiritual roots through the means of dematerialization and disfiguration, may well indicate that 20th century western aesthetics is trying to embrace the aesthetic approach of the East by adopting the concept of *experiencing* rather than of *illustrating* the sacred. Yet, the direct references to Orthodox iconography as a model for every truth-seeking art reveals a hidden desire to baptize and 'church' the world instead of seeing the presence of the truth of Orthodoxy in the world even outside its liturgical boundaries. Abstract art has more in common with the icon than the figurative, so-called 'religious' art. Yet it is not the concept of the immaterial that bonds them. Western artists may be seeking their own way of liberating from matter and attaining the spiritual, but the quest for dematerialization does not respond to the patristic vision of matter that has been redeemed and sanctified by the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ.

The insufficiency of liturgical taste seeks direct and obvious resemblances, while the true resemblance between western art and iconography can be found in their message inspiring the quest for immortality and the eternal rather than the ways they convey it. The distinctive nature of iconography that no other art can resemble lies in its liturgical function – it is designed for veneration and this function is its cornerstone. The western references to iconography (such as Gleizes') are admirable since they refer to prayer as a human way of conversing with God, yet their reference can hardly share the function of iconography. The only reason why a western artist cannot produce a real icon is that an iconographer has to live a liturgical life, be a member of the Orthodox Church and dedicate an icon to the church for a liturgical use.

179 See Brooke 2001.
180 Illustration №81.
181 Illustration №82.

The true uniting element that bonds all arts in the quest for truth and eternity is the longing for beauty. The taste for the beautiful and the good manifested in artistic creation displays the artist's own taste before it is transmitted, or shapes the taste of the public: "To produce in beauty the artist must be in love with beauty".[182] The Orthodox Phillip Sherrard likewise assumed that "For like responds only to like; so that unless our own perception of things is itself charged with the knowledge and love that have their source in God, the latent seeds of divinity in what we perceive will not find in us anything to respond to".[183] Only by loving truth, goodness and beauty can we fulfil our priestly duty of hallowing "the temple in which this making sacred – this holy sacrifice – is our responsibility".[184]

Any Orthodox response to the Kantian disinterest in aesthetic perception will naturally rely on the Christian quest for authenticity and truth. Theological meaning of art is certainly different from a professional art expertise. A Christian viewer may have an amateur eye in terms of art-historical appreciation of art, yet, the Christian perception of art is part of the Christian theology of matter and material beauty and it cannot be excluded from theological concerns. The universal vision that aims at tracing the beauty of God in this world will hardly avoid recognition of the true masterpieces of western art which are singled out by the absence of any claim to "my pleasure", "my opinion", "my interest" but put everyone instead of "I". It is noteworthy that Bulgakov calls beauty 'an objective principle'.[185] The apprehension of beauty, whether divine or created, involves much more than our subjective 'aesthetic' preferences. On the level of the Spirit, the Beautiful coexists with the True.[186]

Considering Florensky's term "Orthodox taste" one might argue that its ultimate rationale is to observe in all things the elements that can contribute to human *Theosis*. According to Dionysius "By the beautiful all things are united together and the beautiful is the beginning of all things, as being the Creative Cause which moves the world and holds all things in existence by their yearning for their own beauty. And it is the Goal of all things, and their Beloved, as being their Final Cause".[187] The Orthodox approach to art does not aim at distinguishing between "good beauty" and "bad beauty" but rather aims at cultivating one's sensibility to the level where the whole universe is embraced by God and bears the imprint

[182] Maritain 1954, 58.
[183] Sherrard 1990, 13.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Bulgakov, in Every 1984, 11.
[186] Ware 2008, 12.
[187] Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, 4:7 (Rolt 2004, 96).

of His touch. An Orthodox Christian with good taste can trace the truth and beauty of the divine splendour within the world through the eyes of tradition rather than looking at the tradition with the fear of the fallen and wounded world around it.

4.7. Western and eastern Christian approaches to the concept of Theoria as seeing

Theoria as the concept of 'seeing' is not limited to visual observation alone. Many references in the Bible point out the difference between physical seeing and perceiving and understanding things through one's intellect or nous.[188] The faithless are usually condemned as the ones who have "eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear".[189] Yet, the infinite mercy of God provides special guidance to those "who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf".[190] The story of St Paul Saul's conversion illustrates in physical terms the whole idea of 'seeing' as a chief requirement for one's communion with God. Saul became physically blind for three days and his blindness was recovered through his faith and became the precondition for his new ability to see things differently in the light of Christ.[191] The physical blindness of Saul refers to the level of human dependence on material world. In order to be guided towards seeing the divine light, human beings need a physical medium. "Invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even this eternal power and Godhead".[192]

Seeing the divine light might be possible even for the blind through prayerful contemplation. Yet, the significance of physical vision as predetermining the nature of perception is never overlooked in the Gospel: "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness".[193] The fact that Jesus is using the word 'eye' instead of nous or mind refers to the fact that spiritual vision is ultimately associated with the physical eye. The eye as a bodily organ is the receiver of information before the mind and the imagination process and analyze it. The text of Matins also says: *"Enlighten our mind's*

[188] The references include the following passages: Deuteronomy 29:4, Isaiah 6:9,10, Isaiah 44:18, Jeremiah 5:21, Matthew 13:14,15, Luke 8:10, John 12:37-41, Acts 28:25-27, Romans 11:8-10, Isaiah 6:9, Isaiah 43:8, Jeremiah 5:21, Jeremiah 36:3, Ezekiel 12:2, Matthew 13:14, Mark 8:18, Luke 8:10, John 12:40, Romans 11:8
[189] Mark 8:18.
[190] Isaiah 43:8
[191] Acts 9:8-9.
[192] Rom. 1:20.
[193] Matthew 6:22-23.

eyes".[194] The purity of heart is the prerequisite to seeing God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God".[195] On the other hand the attainment of the purity of heart is a choice made when one decides how to look at things and events. St Isaac of Syria saw humility as a prerequisite for truly 'seeing': "No one has understanding if he is not humble, and he who lacks humility lacks understanding".[196] St Hesychios the Priest tells us the way to accomplish such purity of heart is watchfulness "a graceful and radiant virtue".[197] The same way Alexander Schmemann suggests the persistent search for Christ is the sign of a true Christian: "the Christian is the one who wherever he or she looks, everywhere sees Christ and rejoices in him".[198]

The patristic vision of Christian perception embraces the whole world without allowing specific exceptions in terms of arts or sciences. Art, as a physical medium assisting humans to discern the presence of God in His Creation appears as a form of a parable itself. It is a human creation that lets us see God's creation in a form understandable to us. Patriarch Bartholomew formulated the idea of communicating through a work of art in a form of a short parable: Child asks a painter: 'Why are you painting this tree, since it is right here?' And the painter replies: 'so that you can see it".[199] The Ecumenical patriarch like the earlier fathers of the Church refers to the idea of 'seeing' in a deeper sense than mere visual observation. It implies to 'understanding', 'perceiving', 'discerning', 'comprehending', 'grasping the essence of' and even 'communicating'. Florensky also suggests that we need icons because the world is not perfect: "If everyone praying in a temple were wholly spiritualized, if everyone praying were truly to see, then there would be no iconostasis other than standing before God himself, witnessing to Him by their holy countenances and proclaiming His terrifying glory by their sacred works".[200] The highly ecumenical scholar of the 14th century Manuel Chrysoloras observed earlier that we are not roused to admire natural objects, which we may see, but the sight of an artistic depiction of them moves us greatly, even though they are not more precise then the models themselves.[201] The very anticipation of mimetic resemblance in western art is often turned into a manoeuvre by

[194] Orthodox Liturgy, Matins, The Third Priestly Prayer.
[195] Matthew 5:8.
[196] Isaac the Syrian, Homily 51.
[197] Hesychios, *Philokalia*, Vol.1, 171.
[198] Schmemann 1973, 113.
[199] Patriarch Bartholomew I in Clement 2007, 84-85.
[200] Florensky 1996, 62.
[201] Manuel Chrysoloras in Mango 1986, 254.

western artists who first induce observers using the public desire for resemblance and then offer them a greater meaning than a visual reproduction can provide. Picasso described the method in terms of surprise as an engaging artistic trick: "the sense of sight enjoys being surprised. If you pretend to see what is in front of you, you are distracted by the idea in your mind… It's the same law which governs humour. Only the unexpected sally makes you laugh".[202]

It is not a coincidence that artists are not often fully aware of the true meaning of their own work especially in terms of theological message hidden under their personal expression. The Christian theory of the 'eye as a lamp of the body' obliges a Christian to serve as a '*Theoros'* while considering a Christian view of any artistic creation among other aspects of human existence. A modern author justly assumes that the difference between the perception of art in the Byzantine world and in our modern times is the modern emphasis on the person of the artist: "To the Byzantine viewer, on the other hand, the response was the viewer's".[203] What changed is, in fact, the introduction of the Kantian concept of the artist-genius that stands above the law and makes the law. This concept, as alien to the Orthodox Christian consciousness as it is, fell under multiple misunderstandings and misinterpretations. The relationship between an artist and a Christian observer can hardly be guided by the artist's judgement of his own art; rather it is more likely that the broader vision of Christian *Theoria* will encourage a more pastoral approach to the artist and his creation. Considering Schmemann's approach to the role of a Christian in the world, the Christian appreciation of art embraces a wider perspective than merely singling out works of Orthodox Christian art. In order to appreciate western art as it is within the spirit of the Orthodox liturgy, A Christian *theoros* is not required to be guided by western aesthetic concepts, but by the Gospel and its commandments. Especially since the western aesthetic concepts are not as unanimous as they might seem from a distance.

The Greek word *Theoria* means *"*contemplation, speculation, a looking at, things looked at" while theoros (θεωρός) means "spectator", from thea (θέα) "a view" and horan (ὁρᾶν)

[202] Picasso in Ashton 1988, 90.
[203] Weil "Originality and the Icon", in Littelwood 1995, 22.

"to see".[204] It expressed the state of being a spectator. Greek θεωρία referred to looking at things, whether with the eyes alone or with the mind and a special observation.

The term was used by the ancient Greeks to refer to the act of experiencing or observing and then comprehending through consciousness, which is called the *nous* or "eye of the soul".[205] Insight into being and becoming (called *noesis*) through the intuitive truth called faith in God leads to truth through our contemplative faculties. Plato, formulated the objects of contemplation contemplated by *theoros as the* Forms, the essences of things, and a philosopher who contemplates these atemporal and aspatial realities is enriched with a perspective on ordinary things superior to that of ordinary people.

Aristotle, on the other hand, distinguished *Theoria* from mere looking for its unpractical purposes, and saw it as an end in itself, the highest activity of man.[206] Both Aristotle like Heraclides of Pontus, arguing that the philosopher who devotes himself to pursuits is superior to ordinary people, compared a philosopher to a spectator (*theoros*) at the Olympic spectacle: unlike the other participants, he does not seek either glory, as does the competitor, or money, as does the businessman. Likewise the *Theoria* (θεωρία) of the universe must be honoured above all things that are considered to be useful. For surely we would not go to such trouble to see men imitating women and slaves, or athletes fighting and running, and not consider it right to theorize without payment (θεωρεῖν ἀμισθί) the nature and truth of reality.[207]

Commenting on Aristotle's view of the lack of practical usefulness of the contemplation of *Theoria,* Andrew Louth said: "The word *Theoria* is derived from a verb meaning to look, or to see: for the Greeks, knowing was a kind of seeing, a sort of intellectual seeing. Contemplation is, then, knowledge, knowledge of reality itself, as opposed to knowing how: the kind of know-how involved in getting things done".[208] Louth recalls the distinction between the active life and contemplation in terms of the Latin ratio - and reason conceived as receptive of truth, beholding, looking – referred to by the Greek words *Theoria* or *sophia* (wisdom) or nous (intellect), or in Latin intellectus".[209] Human

[204] Online etymological dictionary: http://www.etymonline.com/
[205] Matthew, 6:22-34.
[206] Nightingale 2009, 190.
[207] Nightingale 2009, 18.
[208] Louth 2003, 66-67.
[209] Ibid.

intelligence operates at two levels: a basic level concerned with doing things, and another level concerned with beholding, contemplating, knowing reality.

The reservation over the danger of subjectivity and speculation might have been increased by the interpretation introduced by Boethius in 6th century. Boethius translated the Greek word *Theoria* into Latin, not as *contemplatio* but as *speculatio*,[210] and *Theoria* meaning speculative philosophy largely associates with the unreliability of subjective judgement. Gadamer on the other hand, says that for comprehending an artwork one needs to keep an aesthetic distance from the work of art. The distance he is proposing is in the literal sense, "aesthetic distance in a true sense, for it signifies the distance necessary for seeing, and thus makes possible a genuine and comprehensive participation in what is presented before us".[211] It is precisely through the ecstatic self-forgetfulness of the spectator that a work of art opens the absolute moment in which a spectator stands in reconciliation with self. The work of art "which detaches him from everything also gives him back the whole of his being".

Considering the Jungian theory of the collective unconscious one may agree with Gadamer that the spectator is not at all free in his own interpretation and judgement of art but is guided and consumed by the content and character of the artwork itself. Dillenberger points out that the discipline of seeing does not come from what we are told about what we see, but "it comes primarily by seeing and seeing and seeing over and over again".[212] Gombrich believes that "Uncultivated people are but ordinary observers of things, and not critical in distinguishing them, but for that reason they admire more, and are more affected with what they see and therefore express themselves in a warmer and more passionate manner".[213] A good education, however, does not always equip one with good judgement skills. True intelligence can be found in the combination of rational study and intuition or, in other words, one has to trust one's eye and focus on the essence of the object in order to solve an artistic puzzle. One has to possess a desire to communicate, to understand, emphasize, accept and share in order to perceive the true meaning of art, to be a reliable appreciator

[210] See Taxidou 2004, 34.
[211] Gadamer 2004, 124.
[212] Dillenberger 1986, 242.
[213] Gombrich 2006, 57.

and a critic. The true apprehension of art requires the ability of trusting one's own eye with a child-like honesty.

As Metropolitan Anthony eloquently put it "If we are perceptive enough we can hear beyond the tunes that artist wanted to express through this music… And if we are even more talented, through experiencing the author's emotions, we may reach that space where he got his inspiration from – his own depth. In this way beauty becomes not an object of aesthetic observation but an experience that belongs to all of us individually and at the same time to all together".[214] The Christian who sees Christ everywhere is bound to share his vision with others by allowing the others see what he sees. In this respect both artist and observer are in the position of being regarded as both artist and *theoros*.

4.8. Appreciation of art as a form of Theoria

The way of the artist acknowledging his own presence while interacting with another mind and vision ultimately refers to the need for sharing: "To be present means to participate".[215] Gadamer gives the excellent example of a spectator who is present in sharing: Looking with attention and contemplation means sharing. In this context he recalls the Greek idea of *Theoria*. A *theoros* is someone who takes part in a mission to a festival and he has no other function other than just to be there. Attending, in the case of *theoros,* was obviously not perceived as an entirely passive disinterested presence but itself stood for an act that would benefit the rest of society. "In the same way," Gadamer says "Greek metaphysics still conceives the essence of *Theoria* and of nous as purely present to what is truly real, and for us too the ability to act theoretically is defined by the fact that in attending to something one is able to forget one's own purposes".[216] Yet Gadamer is cautious about the dangers of considering *Theoria* as primarily an attitude of subjectivity, as a self-determination of the subjective consciousness, and proposes the way of seeing it as to be committed to what is contemplated. Gadamer's idea of *Theoria* "is a true participation, not something active but something passive (pathos), namely being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees".[217] As Gadamer noted, the very root of the concept of *Theoria,* is precisely a special way of seeing, without which looking and attending would only be an informative and unresponsive act.

[214] Bloom 2007, 710.
[215] Gadamer 2004, 121.
[216] Gadamer 2004, 122.
[217] Gadamer 2004, 122.

It can be argued that Christian asceticism adopted *Theoria* as a method of contemplation and saw it as the key to prayerful contemplation. This theory owes much to the legacy of Plotinus, who believed that everything, including action, is derived from contemplation. Plotinus agreed with Aristotle's systematic distinction between contemplation (*Theoria*) and practice (*praxis*): dedication to the superior life of *Theoria* requires abstinence from the practical, active life. Plotinus explained: "The point of action is contemplation. … Contemplation is therefore the end of action". [218] The ascetic element is inevitably prevalent in the Plotinian description of *theoros*: "such is the life of the divinity and of divine and blessed men: detachments from all things here below, scorn of all earthly pleasures, the flight of the alone to the Alone". [219]

In early Christianity the idea of contemplation was eagerly taken over by Gregory of Nyssa terming it "loving contemplation", [220] a loving understanding of God that grew later into the term "contemplative prayer" referring to the knowledge of God that is guided by love. Together with the meaning of "proceeding through philosophical study of creatures to knowledge of God", θεωρία had, among the Greek Fathers, another important meaning, namely "studying the Scriptures", with an emphasis on the spiritual sense-perception. [221]

In Eastern Orthodox theology, *Theoria* is a necessary requisite on the path to *Theosis*. A Christian cannot acquire the lost likeness without being able to discern God in all things. In its purest form, *Theoria* is considered as the 'beholding', 'seeing' or the 'vision' of God. In the tradition of Dionysius the Areopagite, *Theoria* is the lifting up of the individual out of time, space and created being, while the Triune God reaches down, or descends, to the ascetic. [222] In the theological tradition of St Macarius of Egypt, *Theoria* is the point of interaction between God and the human in the heart of the person, manifesting spiritual gifts to the human heart. [223] St Symeon the New Theologian also taught that one cannot be a theologian unless one sees the uncreated light. [224]

[218] Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI, 9 [9], 11.
[219] Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI, 9 [9], 11.
[220] Entry on θεωρία, Mateo-Seco and Maspero 2009, 736-38.
[221] Cross and Livingstone 1997, "contemplation, contemplative life".
[222] Dionysus, *The Mystical Theology*, Chapter 1, (Rolt 2004, 191-192).
[223] Lossky 1991, 106.
[224] Symeon the New Theologian, *The Discourses* De Catanzaro 1980, 22-23.

St Gregory Palamas expressed *Theoria* as an experience of God as it happens to the whole person (soul or nous), not just the mind or body, in contrast to an experience of God that is drawn from memory, the mind, or in time.[225] According to the Palamite teaching *Theoria* is cultivated through each of the steps of the growing process towards *Theosis*. Gregory further asserted that when Peter, James and John witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor, they were seeing the uncreated light of God, and that it is possible for others to be granted to see it, using spiritual disciplines (ascetic practices) and contemplative prayer. *Theoria* is the experience of the uncreated light in various degrees, i.e. the vision of God or to see God.[226] St Maximus the Confessor eloquently explains that man is "granted the grace of theology when, carried on wings of love" in *Theoria* and "with the help of the Holy Spirit, he discerns - as far as this is possible for the human *nous* - the qualities of God".[227] Yet, the same saint discerns the danger of employing *Theoria* alone: "knowledge without praxis is the demons' theology".[228] Evagrius pointed out earlier: "One who prays truly will be a theologian and one who is a theologian, will pray truly".[229] Palamas repeated later: "it is those who see God who are properly theologians, and theology is *Theoria*".[230] St Gregory the Theologian says that "*Theoria* and praxis are beneficial because *Theoria* ... guides him to the holy of holies and restores him to his original nature; whereas praxis receives and serves Christ and tests love with actions. Clearly, *Theoria* is the vision of God.... praxis is whatever deeds it takes to lead to this love". In the Eastern Christian traditions, *Theoria* is the most crucial component of prayer that itself is an essential part of *Theosis*. *Theoria* is a vision of God illuminating the *nous* and on the other hand one may consider it springing out of the purity of the *nous*. The combination of theory and practice in patristic thought is ultimately based on the requirement of involving *Theoria* in both aspects of a Christian life. A Christian contemplates God while both praying and living the Gospel. *Theoria* as the vision of God in this respect embraces the discernment of the core of all beings wherein the presence of God is detected. *Theoria* therefore is more than mere intellectual ability, it involves the type of knowledge that is obtained through contemplative experience. Mystical knowledge, even

[225] Lossky 1991, 162-163.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Maximos, *Philokalia*. Vol,2, 69; 26.
[228] Maximos, PG 91, 601 C. Letter 20, *to Marinos the Monk*.
[229] Evagrius, *On Prayer*, (Bamberger 1972, 61).
[230] Gregory Palamas, *Triads*. 1:3, (Gendle 1982, 15).

though it is different from rational knowledge, embraces it and expands it to a greater extent. God is beyond logic, but he is not without logic. Therefore *Theoria* does not refer to mere philosophical discourse or speculations but it embraces the revelation as well as personal effort to attain to that revelation. *Theoria* is a form of synergetic cooperation with God through a two-sided interaction. It is an inseparable part of the process of *Theosis* and involves the steps of catharsis and illumination, the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, the experience of the uncreated light. A *theoros* is the one who sees things through the 'lenses' of divine wisdom and attempts at sharing his vision with others by letting them illumine their own hearts and minds. The true *theoroi* are the ones who "while still living in this corruptible flesh, yet growing in incalculable power by a certain 'piercingness' of contemplation, the Eternal Brightness is able to be seen".[231]

The basic underlying principle that provides the most convincing and unquestionable appreciation of the work of art is accommodation and a respect for the other. Aristotle posited the imagination as chief agent in the making of art, rather than seeing art as a mimicking of that which exists, and distinguished between knowing – *Theoria,* doing – *praxis,* and making – *poiesis.* The wider understanding of the artist seems to embrace all the three aspects while the observer is chiefly entitled to share the duty of *theoros*. When a spectator looks at the work of art he/she is given the privilege of sharing in part of the soul of another person. The artist contemplates the beauty of God's creation through *Theoria* while the art appreciator discerns the artistic appreciation of God's Creation, by employing the method of *Theoria*. The element of sharing itself provides a safe zone in which two people meet in the work of art, which itself becomes an independent being. Therefore the encounter in art creates an atmosphere of a triune harmony, which itself emerges as a living experience and therefore worth appreciating.

4.9. Artistic sharing from the perspective of the Christian concept of Theoria

The work of art 'happens' as a being in the moment of sharing. A public tendency towards appreciating a new trend in art most frequently varies from the sense of protest to the desire for sharing. The great masterpieces of art serve as meeting points for countless souls through the components that unite us all regardless of their different historical, cultural and educational backgrounds. If the uniting influence of art passes the historical, educational,

[231] Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, (Gildea 1992, 18.89).

class or cultural boundaries then it is likely that the key elements of artistic expression are to be found precisely in art's ability to appeal to the emotional and intuitional composition of the human soul.

The religious nature of art appreciation has been widely discussed in modern psychoanalysis. According to Otto Rank the similarity between an artist and a believer is to be found in the similar constitution of their souls. The enjoyer of art encounters the soul of the artist, which was put into the work and in that moment their meeting happens "just as the believer finds his soul in religion or in God, with whom he feels himself to be one".[232] Rank identifies the unity in a spiritual context, "which underlies the concept of collective religion, and not a psychological identification with the artist".[233] Therefore an anti-Freudian psychoanalyst suggests that religious and spiritual significance unites the artist and the viewer in a much broader and greater way than the mere cognitive status of their interaction.

The artist's ownership of the work of art tends to refer conventionally to the artist's ego and his self-satisfaction. Yet, it is also widely admitted that "From the moment when the work is taken over and recognized by the public, or even merely offered to the public, it ceases to be the possession of the artist, not only economically but spiritually... it ceases to be the personal achievement of the individual and becomes a symbol for others and their spiritual demands".[234] The vision of the artist may not necessarily meet that of the viewers since the work of art provides an enormous space for a limitless creative interpretation.

According to Rank's theory the search for immortality is the chief agent in creative activity. Yet, the search for immortality through a material medium is destined to involve more than the fear of death. The artist's quest for appreciation is not much more than seeking broader acceptance and a place of resting in a certain 'safe zone'. Only after receiving certain approval for speaking out the collective mind, the artist can stand before God and claim the priestly duty of offering a sacrifice on behalf of all who seek the eternal truth.

The artist's urge to involve himself in the picture has been widespread throughout the history of art. The earliest example of a self-portrait as the most straightforward way of

[232] Rank 1923, 109.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.

presenting one's own image is commonly considered to be Jan Van Eyck's Portrait of a Man in a Red Turban.[235] The genre of self-portrait was commonly admired and appreciated since The Renaissance and ultimately found a rather deep psychological expression in the self-portraits of Rembrandt.[236] Yet, even from the beginning of its emergence the self-inclusion in painting embraced wider experiments than a straightforward presentation of one's own self. The proposition of the element of play went as far as almost playing 'hide and seek' on the part of some artists. The most memorable examples include Jan Van Eyck's *The Betrothal of the Arnolfini*, where the mirror in the back implies the inclusion of the image of the artist in his own painting. Van Eyck's idea of self-inclusion into the painting through the mirror image must later have inspired Velasquez to experiment with mirror reflection even further, enabling him to come up with the most unexpected solution of self-inclusion in Las Meninas, where the mirror shows the royal couple as the object to be painted while the picture in front of us demonstrates what is supposed to be seen by them. The use of mirror in this painting obtains a political, social and even theological significance and appears as a key tool in conveying the message about the priorities between what is of this world and what is eternal. Another even more creative solution to the method is Pieter Claesz's *Vanitas with Violin and Glass Ball*,[237] where the artist's figure is visible in the reflection while the artist himself is preoccupied with painting the details of surface textures.

Placing the depiction of a mirror in the background produces the effect of an interplay of levels: seeing the front in the background, thus mentally involving the viewer into the space of the picture. With the help of the mirror image the viewer is both the watcher and the watched, and shares the atmosphere of the painting. Édouard Manet used the mirror reflection element as an intriguing solution in his famous painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*[238] thus involving himself in the painting as well as moving proficiently the front scene to the back of the picture in order to communicate the sad story of the barista depicted in the front.

[235] Illustration №83.
[236] Illustration №84.
[237] Illustration №85.
[238] Illustration №86.

The special interest in depicting the mirror reflection is distinguished from a self-portrait by pointing out the artist's real presence rather than his idea of his own self, which is more characteristic to self-portraiture. A self-portrait offers a meeting with an artist face to face where the 'dividing' boundary is the picture frame. An artist desiring to paint a classic self-portrait can do it by depicting his own likeness as he sees it in the mirror, while the artist who paints the whole mirror with his own self in it makes his viewpoint as ours.[239] We stand where he stood in the moment of painting, by which he makes a statement that he engages the spectator with the work of art on a physical level rather than a merely visual one.

The use of mirror reflections for the purpose of creating a living communication with the spectator can embrace more aspects than an involvement of the artist in the picture. The twentieth century modernist experiments proved it possible to involve even a spectator within the picture by installing concaved pieces of real mirror in the painting.[240] This method allowed the painting to pass the limits set by time, culture and society. The kinetic element proposed a type of painting that changes according to the spectator's appearance. The viewer becomes a compositional element in the picture and enhances its dynamism by appearing in it. The communication between the artist and the observer takes place within the painting in visual terms.

4.10. An Orthodox Christian understanding of the western artistic method of using artistic deceit as a rhetorical device

In spite of the artists' attempted engagement of public eye in the work of art, the work of art is often mistaken by the public as a mere reproduction of what already exists in nature. In spite of the ancient world's consideration of mimetic resemblance as a merit in artistic excellence, the modern western artistic legacy demonstrated a different approach to the subject, the origins of which are traced back to Renaissance art. Matisse gently articulated the artistic protest when he approached a lady while she criticized the naturalistic failure in his painting: "Madame you are mistaken. This is not a woman, this is a picture"[241] - exclaimed the artist The account resembles Van Gogh's response to someone who disapproved his *Potato Eaters* for not being depicted correctly: "Tell him that my great

[239] With the exception of *Las Meninas*, where our viewpoint is the viewpoint of the royal couple.
[240] Illustrations №87-88.
[241] Gombrich 1956, 115.

longing is to learn to make these very incorrectnesses, remodellings, changes in reality, so that they may become, yes, lies if you like – but truer than the literal truth".[242] Leonardo chose making mistakes intentionally in the interest of higher things thus proving that "Imagination is the queen of error and falsehood".[243] Goethe dismissed all these dialogues on deceiving the eye as 'sparrow aesthetics'.[244] Probability, he said, "is the condition of art, but within the realm of probability the highest, what would otherwise not be manifest, must be given. Correctness is not worth sixpence if it is nothing more".[245] Western painters obviously treat their own creations as independent entities and manifest "no desire to show this man as he is, but only as he might be".[246] Lack of guidance and experience often puts spectators in a situation where they feel confused by the sight of an artwork. Goethe argues that

> "A work of art can seem to be a product of nature only to a wholly uncultivated spectator, whom the artist still appreciates and values even if he has only reached the first stage of understanding. But he, unfortunately, can only be satisfied when the artist descends to his level, and when the true artist, spurred on by his genius, takes wing and comes full circle in his work, he will never rise again".[247]

According to Goethe the uncultivated viewer wants to see a work of art as natural because he wants to enjoy it in a natural and often a crude and vulgar way.[248] In another case an insecure spectator feels like he has to rise to the level of the artist in order to enjoy his work.[249]

Gombrich blames the dualistic approach in Plato's thought for seeing a visual thing either real or deceptive, an illusion, a distraction and a lie as if "since an artist can only copy the sensual world that is itself a mere copy, he can only feed on illusions, and lead the mind further astray".[250] Baudelaire believed that the artist allows us to see "another nature".[251]

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[242] Van Gogh 1997, Vol 2, letter 418, 401.
[243] Champfleury in Tatarkiewicz 2011, 281.
[244] Goethe, in Gombrich 1973, 194.
[245] Goethe 1980, 97.
[246] Klee 1961, 95.
[247] Goethe 1980, 28.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Goethe 1980, 30.
[250] Gombrich 2006, 15.

Picasso almost poetically articulated the significance of the deceptiveness of artistic presentation: "Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand".[252] Therefore true mastery consists not in finding the perfect outward resemblance with the object but in acquiring "the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lie".[253] This very 'lie' that art proposes has been the object of serious philosophical discussions and treatises throughout the centuries. Picasso justly pointed out that the invention of photography made it clearer what the painting is not and therefore made true painting possible.[254] The Orthodox authors often omit the fact that the standards of truth in the eyes of western painters are based not on a comparison of the theme with the depicted image but on the capacity of the image to evoke the mood of the theme.

Long before Picasso, Aristotle conveyed the awareness of the significance of metaphor along similar lines: "Homer more than any other has taught the rest of us the art of framing lies in the right way".[255] Aristotle therefore spoke of art as a metaphor rather than mimesis or imitation as did Plato. Metaphoric language, according to Aristotle, grants a poetic quality to the work of art and gets rid of the earthliness of prosaic nature.[256] Cicero like many other philosophers, "did not rest his claim on any vague or elusive idea of aesthetic excellence, but on the down-to-earth conception of oratory as an instrument of persuasion.[257] The poet's task unlike that of a historian is to describe "not the thing that has happened but a kind of thing that might happen".[258] Schelling claims likewise that "Philosophy does not present real things, but rather only their archetypes; the same holds true for art".[259] Therefore, what is unreal is not art but the world that is a reflection of its archetype and the artists "present the intellectual world in the reflected world".[260]

Aristotle saw art itself as a form of metaphor and mastering it as the ability of making connections: "Metaphors must be drawn, from things that are related to the original things, and yet not obviously so related – just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive

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[251] Baudelaire 1981, 68.
[252] Picasso in Ashton (1988), 3.
[253] Picasso, p.90.
[254] Picasso, p.109.
[255] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 24, 1460a.
[256] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 22, 1459a.
[257] Gombrich 2006, 25.
[258] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 9, 1451b.
[259] Schelling in Cahn and Meskin 2007, 177.
[260] Ibid.

resemblances even in things far apart".[261] The eloquence of metaphor cannot be learnt from others, which Aristotle considered a sign of genius "since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars".[262] Therefore the use of metaphor as a "lie" refers not to deception but to finding a key to a greater truth that is otherwise unperceivable. In the context of artistic presentation, the imaginary is an extension rather than deprivation of truth. A. Storr criticized Freud for failing to realize that "phantasy might serve the purpose of enhancing man's grasp of reality".[263]

It is a common knowledge that direct language is incapable of moving the senses as strongly as does the power of metaphor: "Where the word stops, there starts the song, exultation of the mind bursting forth into the voice".[264] The use of metaphor allows one to address general issues through particular cases instead of passing judgement on individuals or events, which only appear as abridged manifestations of the broader issue. In every artistic creation whether it is a literary art or painting, the artistic assessment of a particular situation embraces general concepts and aims at appealing to the conscience of readers or viewers. Art is beyond doubt "opening into the depths, heights, and inexplicability of existence, road that lead man freely into the mystery, and transform anxiety into something that has no words with which to be expressed".[265] Hegel posed the meaning of art as "...essentially a question, an address to the responding soul of man, an appeal to affections and intelligence".[266] The peculiarity of poetry as spiritual nourishment consists in the fact that "it does not satiate, it only makes man more hungry, and that is its grandeur".[267] The inspirational power of poetic work consists precisely in its deliberate abstinence from providing satisfaction or a clear answer that would lead the observer into a dead end. Poetry stimulates imagination, provokes the sense of wonder, and inspires to search for deeper meanings through the depths of divine wisdom. The organism of art "generates the highest unity and regularity and reveals to us far more directly than does nature the miracles of our own spirit".[268] Most western scholars agree that a poet is not lying, nor that he claims any

[261] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1412a.
[262] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 22, 1459a.
[263] Storr 1993, pp.45-46.
[264] Aquinas in Maritain 1954, 251.
[265] Rupnik in Skliris 2010, 53.
[266] Hegel from Cahn and Meskin 2007, 180.
[267] Maritain 1954, 235.
[268] Schelling from Cahn&Meskin, 174.

factual precision but that they "improve upon human nature to correct the all-too-human nature of their readers".[269]

Any painting, whether liturgical or realistic, refers to reality using a conventional language. Realistic painting is more concerned with resemblance but it also creates an entity independent of its model. Gadamer rightly pointed out the insuperable ontological difference that exists "between the one thing, that is a likeness, and the other that it seeks to resemble".[270] In fact, "It is the truth of our own world – the religious and moral world in which we live – that is presented before us and in which we recognize ourselves".[271] Cezanne claimed that "fruits love having their portraits painted". He was sure that they speak to the public about the fields they have left behind "When I'm outlining the skin of a lovely peach, or the melancholy of an apple, with touches of pulpy paint, I catch a glimpse in the reflections they exchange of the same mild shadow of renunciation".[272] Capturing the inner essence of beings and letting them express themselves has concerned the art of all times and of all cultures. The conscious articulation however, started at the beginning of the Renaissance when the inner being of things became the object of observation and expression. Artists, apart from treating the painted objects as living beings, also looked at the material as living entities. Michelangelo lived in marble canyons in order to share the life of the material he was going to work with. The half unfinished statues of his 'slaves' also imply the custody of matter from which they 'want' to be freed. Gombrich referred to the statues of Moore[273] as the result of his being guided by the 'will' of the material "Moore did not start by looking at his model. He started by looking at his stone. He wanted to 'make something' out of it … by trying to find out what the stone wanted".[274] Gombrich emphasizes the same attitude as many other western artists would eagerly approve: "He did not try to make a woman of stone, but a stone which suggests a woman".[275]

Avant-garde artists took an opportunity to disclose the truth through the non-figurative language of abstract art. To be an abstract painter in Klee's opinion meant to "distil pure

[269] See Potolsky 2006, 64.
[270] Gadamer 2004, 114.
[271] Gadamer 2004, 124.
[272] Cezanne in Doran 2000,156.
[273] Illustration №89.
[274] Gombrich 2007, 585.
[275] Ibid.

pictorial relations".[276] What is memorable and meaningful in art is not the plot or the presentation on their own but the plot and presentation become meaningful only with consideration of the general idea, mood and philosophy, which they embody. The multitude of 'isms' in the 20th century questioned and continued proving irrelevant Plato's idea about art being nothing but a mere copy of another copy of the authentic reality. Western artists firmly believe that "art does not reproduce the visible but it makes visible".[277] The Avant-garde finalized the status of art as an independent being by focusing on the value of particulars for their own sake, by fragmenting and narrowing down the visual world yet, widening and broadening the theories behind it. The question of a lie and truth is more complicated in the case of Surrealist painting and even further in Hyperrealism. The Surrealists desired to propose a surreal state while retaining a faithfulness to the academic precision of the visual modelling of material objects. Maritain complained that "Surrealism simply lies to us when it pretends to break with reason in the very field of art properly so called, or of *techne* in the Platonic sense".[278] Maritain considers the main mistake of modern art's flight from naturalism in general to be that it seeks freedom *from* rather than freedom *to*. Surrealist painting is the most vivid manifestation of the dilemma. The dream-like reality of the Surrealists does not make it quite clear what the surrealists escape from, or what they desire. On the other hand Gombrich noted on Picasso's violins that in spite of their highly stylized nature, some of their aspects stand out so clearly that we feel that we can touch and handle them while others are somehow blurred. Gombrich believes that "this strange medley of images represents more of the 'real' violin than any single snapshot or meticulous painting could ever contain".[279] He sees Picasso's choice as a return to what he calls the Egyptian principles, in which an object was drawn from the angle from which its characteristic form came out most clearly. Picasso in this scenario provides an example of an intelligent painting rather than a sensual. It was precisely Picasso's excellence of draughtsmanship, his technical virtuosity, which made him long for the simple and uncomplicated. Gombrich presumes that he "must have given him a peculiar satisfaction to throw all his cunning and cleverness overboard and to make something with his own hands, which recalls the works of peasants or children".[280] His preference for the primitive,

[276] Klee 1961, 72.
[277] Klee 1961, 76.
[278] Maritain 1954, 83.
[279] Gombrich 2007, 574.
[280] Gombrich 2007, 577.

interest and attempt to develop the art of listening to the material, gave the new value to the understanding of art in general. It was the urge for honesty and truth that the painters like Picasso sought in the primitive since "the primitive may be savage and cruel, but at least he seems to lack the burden of hypocrisy".[281] The true artistic urge for rebelling against social stereotypes is not caused by the desire for being different but it is driven by the quest for honesty that allows the freedom of creative intuition.

20th century art took the fragmentation and dematerialization in art to extreme forms which is best exemplified in the phenomenon of Tachisme both in music and in painting. Narrowing down the subject matter step by step brought to the eventual disintegration of artistic forms in compositions where artists are trying to free from matter completely. The Suprematism proposed the idea that only feeling is real while the appearance of things is meaningless.[282] Maritain noted that "Feeling for him [Malevich] remained merely subjective feeling, was not raised to spiritual intentionality. He remained secluded from the infinite meaningfulness of the existential world of Nature".[283] Yet, the way Malevich employs the term 'feeling' can also be identified with a mood, or an atmosphere, which the combination of lines and colours can create and offer for sharing. It has to be mentioned that even absolute and extreme tachisme will always involve matter even if the composition only includes the performer himself (like in the case of John Cage's famous 4'33 in music). At least visual art requires some substantial medium as a minimum while non-being is not art.

The mysteriousness and ambiguity of artistic language derived from its 'lying' or 'deceitful' nature often poses a dilemma to the public. A proper appreciation of art requires a certain level of intelligence; it is oriented on the "Pleasure of the intelligence-permeated eye".[284] Western art discloses or reveals the truth by being a sign or a password. It conveys something beyond itself. At the same time "the gate through which the work of art as password permits the self to go beyond itself, also leads the self back to itself as self".[285] The work of art is ultimately designed for guiding observers into their own selves provided that the observer can offer an appropriate response to what he observes. Visual

[281] Gombrich 2007, 586.
[282] Malevich in Maritain 1954, 219.
[283] Maritain 1954, 219.
[284] Maritain 1954, 217.
[285] Hofstadter 1968, 29-30.

communication stirs up certain emotions in the public and forms a public opinion, employing various visual tools for emotional and mental manipulation. The unique requirement of every artistic expression that distinguishes art from other forms of communication is that art should not simply tell the truth, it has to conceal the truth, in order to let observers find it on their own with the help of the work of art. Goethe went even further and claimed that "art should not simply speak to the mind through the senses; it must also satisfy the senses themselves. Then the mind may join in and give its approval".[286] According to Goethe's view the experience of pleasure itself is the key to artistic appreciation. The Goethe's point suggests that art differs from documentary evidence through its ability to 'tranquilize' the mind through sensual delight. Therefore, the influence of the senses on the mind proves to be more powerful and effective than direct communication.

Whether it has an undesirable tranquilizing effect or merely cultivates one's discernment, rhetoric as the art of persuasion consists primarily of the method of manipulating the senses as well as the mind. Manipulation is the key element to success in art - "The good orator must above all be a psychologist who knows how to manipulate the hearer's emotions",[287] and the manipulation is not necessarily driven by evil purposes. The artistic method of persuasion proves that painting for Giotto and of Giotto is definitely "more than a substitute for a written word".[288] Search for truth happens through the work of art: "The art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e., this deconcealing i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work. Art is truth setting itself to work".[289] Art both in the west and in the east functions as a form of rhetoric.

The unique element in the rhetorical operation of western art is precisely its treatment of the religious aspect. Unlike the liturgical art of the Christian East the West is choosing a secular 'vocabulary' that adds to its rhetorical manoeuvre. Western artists since the Renaissance, unlike Orthodox iconographers, did not enjoy enough support from the church and theology, forcing them to approach their religious expressions even more creatively. The application of naturalistic style put the religious theme at the risk of turning into a

[286] Goethe 1980, 70.
[287] Gombrich 2006, 26.
[288] Gombrich 2007, 202.
[289] Heidegger in Cahn&Meskin 351.

cliché in Renaissance Italy. The division between the art of the religious theme and art inspiring a religious devotion polarized more in the following periods in western art. Therefore, the religious meaning and influence in western art does not necessarily refer to an explicit religious content and motif. Paul Tillich justly ascribed "more of the quality of sacredness to a still life by Cezanne[290] or a tree by van Gogh[291] than to a picture of *Jesus*[292] by Uhde".[293] Likewise, the portraits by Rembrandt or abstract paintings by Rothko[294] might inspire a deeper religious feeling and devotion than any religious paintings by the artists of the Flemish Baroque.[295] Even different paintings by the same artist may reflect the same divergence. A western scholar observed that "the works of the Roman Catholic Rouault, for instance are more interesting and profound when clowns[296] and prostitutes are depicted than when he deals with religious figures and the Christ[297]".[298] More religious significance can be observed in secular paintings, in which nature or natural things were painted. Dillinberger observed that artists, "freed of a religious tradition that no longer informed them, were forming more fundamental perceptions in art no longer related to the conventional religious tradition".[299] Therefore, "...the religious quality of a work does not depend upon its subject but its spirit".[300] Western art reveals religious sensibility in a way different from Eastern Christian understanding. It allows more ambiguity in the rhetorical approach to creativity: Concealment is the key in western art that invites and engages an observer into the search for truth while the East chooses a more direct way of preaching through the images of their venerable prototypes. Yet the symbolism of the iconic imagery is also another key that conceals in order to reveal the idea more profoundly.

Subsequently the religious value in western art appears differently from that of iconography. In some cases including Rembrandt it is the artist's deep psychological expression of pastoral love, compassion and empathy for humankind. In case of Rothko it may be and a sense of immersion into the depths of one's own soul and staying alone with

[290] Illustration №90.
[291] Illustration №91.
[292] Illustration №92.
[293] Tillich 1964, 89
[294] Illustration №93.
[295] Illustration №94.
[296] Illustration №95.
[297] Illustration №96.
[298] Dillenberger 1986, 207.
[299] Dillenberger 1986, 120-121.
[300] Maritain 1954, 18.

one's own conscience. Rothko himself pointed out that not accurate resemblance but "mood was the subjective factor that, allied with the objective participation in the world of light, produced the new unity of subjective and objective".[301] In the case of Velasquez and contemporary Dutch painters[302], it might be the love for the characters even in their misery. Their work catches and eternalizes a trivial moment and by so doing, concretizes the eternal. The eternal can translate into the quest for salvation and eternal happiness, and can be communicated through emotional stimulation. Andrey Tarkovsky assumed that: "Film is an emotional reality and that is how the audience receives it – as a sacred reality".[303] Tarkovsky saw the religious impression of a true work of art in its power to "affect the soul of a person's spiritual foundation".[304] Gombrich suggests that Chinese landscapes[305] derived from the practice of religious meditation. Devout Chinese artists painted water and mountains "in the spirit of reverence, not in order to teach any particular lesson, nor to provide mere decorations, but to supply material for deep thought".[306] The meditative creation awaits a similar response, which eventually grants art a religious quality. The artistic ability to share the life impulse contains a sacred and deifying element even if it is not predetermined consciously. The very idea of art is intrinsically religious since it addresses the soul, the spirit, through emotions and senses as opposed to machinery and calculation. Art is religious since "it leads man to the awareness of anxiety that is deep inside his being, which science, with the objective formality of its rules or technology, which is programmed to avoid any risk of error, can never manage to satisfy."[307] The magnificence of the imagination forced Einstein to proclaim: "He who has never been deceived by a lie does not know the meaning of bliss".[308]

4.11. An Orthodox Christian use of art as a form of rhetoric

The conservative Orthodox view of western art eagerly limits it to illusionism that "wants to be a match for sensory reality, but for all its tricks it never attains reality and at best, if it did attain it, it would become unnecessary as art. It only attempts to deceive us that it is a

[301] Rothko 2004, 35.
[302] Illustration №97.
[303] Tarkovsky 2006, 176.
[304] Tarkovsky 2006, 137.
[305] Illustration №98.
[306] Gombrich 2007, 150.
[307] Rupnik in Skliris 2010, 53.
[308] Einstein 1955, Doc. 389.

match for reality".[309] In the Orthodox Church, the dichotomy between the rational and the emotional approaches to the perception of art perhaps relates to the famous saying of St Basil regarding the painting as "a book for the illiterate".[310] A rather literal understanding of St Basil's words in the West subsequently gave birth to the appreciation of art as an illustration. Renaissance religious painting evolved into an illustration of a superficially imposed religious theme, and imbued it with a confusion between the real and the symbolic. In the East, on the other hand, the meaning of 'the book' itself embraced the living Tradition of the Church as well as Holy Scripture. The western devotion to the book of the Holy Bible is driven by a rational device, while the eastern concept of tradition entrusts more to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is communicated through prayerful contemplation and involves the senses as much as the mind of the receiver. So the notion of art as 'the book for the illiterate' embraced a much broader response to artistic creation in the Orthodox consciousness, than it did in western spirituality, that is until the artistic gift found its own way of applying religious sensibility on a more profound level than embodying an overt religious theme in the form of a mere illustration. The illiteracy of the early Christian society may indeed have been the initial cause of the Church's adopting the form of painting for instructing the faithful. Yet eventually the potentials of the language of painting somewhat outweighed the power of literary expression through its irresistible appeal to the senses. "The function of the religious images was to instruct, to stir the religious emotions of the people, and to inspire feelings of devotion".[311] Thus it has become, in time, a means of preaching the truth more powerfully than the spoken word and the written letter could achieve. The faithful who came to the church for prayer and to learn about the Gospel were offered not only the Book to read through images, but also the power of expression coming from the visual depiction that would touch and shake their hearts.[312] Gombrich notes that in the Norman West the visual images "lived on in the minds of the people even more powerfully than did the words of the preacher's sermon".[313]

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[309] Florensky 2002, 181.
[310] St John of Damascus quotes St Basil, *On the Divine Images*, treatise 1.17. The phrase was later repeated by Pope Gregory in his letter to Serenus, bishop of Marseilles in 600. He wrote to the iconoclast bishop: "What writing (scriptura) is to those who can read, a painting (pictura) presents to the uneducated who look at it". Norberg (1982), 768 (register IX, letter 209), 874 (XI.10).
[311] Andreopoulos 2006, 66.
[312] Mathew 1964, 133.
[313] Gombrich 2007, 177.

Art in Byzantium was certainly employed as the most powerful form of rhetoric for persuading people to believe in what they see and not only what they read or hear about. In Byzantium this had a strictly theological meaning. Even though Christ became matter and was seen by humankind, neither the earliest icons nor the apocryphal literature can offer a precise documentary record of his visual appearance. One of the observations Mango makes about the literature generated throughout the iconoclastic controversy, is that the discussion was concerned with theological arguments and not the artistic problem of likeness. Neither iconoclasts nor the Orthodox ever asked the question 'How do we know what Christ really looks like?' Christians maintained that the face of Christ portrayed his incarnate image and it was not possible for anyone to portray his divinity as such. Theodore the Studite saw the resemblance of the image to its archetype inevitable as far as the presented image stood as a symbol representing its archetype. He wrote: "Every image has a relation to its archetype, the natural image has a natural relation, while the artificial image has an artificial relation".[314] The natural image, by which St Theodore means the incarnate Christ, "is identical in both essence and in likeness with that of which it bears the imprint"[315] while painting as an artificial and handmade image has an indirect yet an acceptable relation to its model.

If we apply the patristic concept of knowledge to artistic experience, it is only natural that iconography should be regarded as a superior form of art since its way of knowing and comprehending is not based on natural knowledge but on *noetic* and prayerful experience. However, the fathers hardly see icons in the context of rivalry with other art forms.[316] The only art the fathers might contrast icons with were idols since the problem was raised by iconoclasm. Yet, unlike the iconoclasts, the objections the fathers made against idols applied to the theological error of idolatry rather than to their artistic execution. The way the theology of the incarnation might have looked at pagan statues would be the embodiment of nonexistent entities and their artistic excellence as abused by surrendering them to the false notion of mythological gods. A fictional god is not *the* God, nor can be the statue his embodiment. Yet, the truly Christian appreciation of such an 'empty body' can be

[314] Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons, Third Refutation, B2*.
[315] Ibid.
[316] except the indecent images: see the Council in Trullo, Canon 100.

seen in St Paul's response to the altar 'to an unknown god'[317], which he enlightened with the light of Christ and used it as a rhetorical tool for proclaiming the true God.

The Church's struggle against iconoclasm as a response to the Christological controversy considering the two natures of Christ, acknowledged the power of artistic expression as the most powerful rhetorical device. Art is meant to embody the invisible truth, and the very essence of art is intrinsically related to the theological dogma of the unity of Christ's two natures. Pointing and leading towards eternity is the underlining method of God's *oikonomia* as much as it is the essential feature of truly great artistic expression.

St Augustine assumes that what a good orator needs as a rhetorical device is "words that implore, that rebuke, that stir, that check, and whatever other styles may avail to move the audience's minds and spirits".[318] St Augustine believes that precisely the language of art and not the message is the one that gives delight and is the target of the rhetoric: "It frequently happens that even falsehoods give delight when they are convincingly laid bare and revealed to an audience. It is not because they are false, you see, that they delight, but because it is true that they are false, the speech by which this is shown to be true also gives delight".[319] Yet, rhetoric as a way of manipulation is not necessarily a violation of free will but an aid to spiritual growth and formation. Good oratorical skills were highly appreciated by Christian society since its earliest existence. Theophanes the chronicler calls St John of Damascus 'John the *Chrysorrhoas'* flowing with gold, St John Chrysostom enjoyed the title of 'golden mouth'. The fathers of the Church eagerly studied oratorical skills. Gregory of Nazianzus is referred as a great orator, St Basil whose eloquence of speech surpassed the potentials of visual presentation, founded the oratory school in Caesarea.

The power of rhetoric lay precisely in its ability to engage an observer freely in a playful discovery of the truth instead of imposing the universally acclaimed truth directly. While the aim of rhetoric is to convince and persuade, its real task is to find the most appealing way to touch the hearts of the observers, to move them with a desire to search and find. In this respect artwork truly 'happens' when it is responded to by a perceptive eye. One may criticize Florensky's simplification of faith via the magnification of an artistic creation:

[317] Acts 17:23.
[318] Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, Hill & Rotelle 1996, 203.
[319] Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, 216.

"There exists the icon of the Holy trinity by St Andrei Rublev; therefore, God exists".[320] Yet, his expression ultimately points to the power of visual presentation on public opinion as well as on their faith.

Even though art as a mirror has long been associated with deception, the element of poetry emerges as the right angle pointing towards the greater truth raising the minds of observers above documentary realism. Both Western and Orthodox views on art in general meet on one point that while imitation can deceive the eye "poetry does not deceive".[321] Metaphor involves a 'negative' step in which the initial meaning of the reference to the everyday world is suspended in order to make possible a new creative reference, a recreating of reality. Poetic sensibility turns the lie and a deception into an influential rhetorical device for speaking the truth more powerfully than the straightforward message can. Art eventually turns into "a kind of miraculous preaching"[322] owing its elevating and inspiring nature precisely to the rhetorical use of metaphor.

4.12. Appreciation of visual art as a form of play in western aesthetics

Plato introduced art as a mirror and play, which is 'not a serious business'.[323] In spite of admitting certain positive elements in it, Plato viewed art in general as "the inferior mistress of an inferior friend, and the parent of an inferior progeny"[324] since it was not serious enough for wise men to practice art. However, this 'unserious business' perplexed philosophers of all times by its power of influence over the standards of morality and intellectual development.

The reference to art as a play invokes a logical urge for linking a player with the artist as if he is the one who proposes the rules of the game. Yet, the real question is who participates in the play apart from the artist, what the rules are and who sets them. Much has been said in Western thought about the primacy of play over consciousness in many disciplines, including clinical psychology, philosophy and aesthetics. The primary association of the concept of play always points to the idea of a child's play, in which the child is totally absorbed and loses his own will following the rules of the game. The imaginary zone

[320] Florensky 1996, 68.
[321] Maritain 1954, 53.
[322] Maritain 1954, 187.
[323] Plato, *Republic*, 602b.
[324] Plato, *Republic*, 603b.

offered in play links art to the child's play where "the individual is able, by aid of collective or social ideology, to find such an illusory plane, wherein he can live potentially or symbolically without doing so in reality".[325] In a broader context play prepares a child for living a real life while anticipating possible circumstances that might happen in the future. The game is the model of life for the player. The game has its own rules while the player has to acquire a certain freedom from social prejudices and stereotypes in order to let his imagination apply different options to the game. Only a free individual aiming at the 'right form' can create an ideal 'game' that can eventually dictate standards to society and become its possible model.

Play naturally carries the danger of being misused, like a drug, as a way to a wasteful escape from the real world if its true value is neglected and it is exploited for mere time consumption and entertainment. Games provide a safe zone free from the requirements of conventionalism or adjustment to the circumstances and therefore offer options of being employed for different purposes. Otto Rank suggested that neurosis is somehow related to the lack of playful ability: "The neurotic must first learn to live playfully, illusorily, unreal, on some plane of illusion – first of all on the inner emotional plane. This is a gift, which the artist as an allied type, seems to possess from the outset, and in an even higher degree than the average person possesses it".[326] Thus, the ability to play as an element of active imagination is a natural quality of a healthy person and artists seem to possess it to a greater degree. According to Kant 'Soul' (*Geist*) as the animating principle of the mind animates the psychic substance (*Seele*) and employs it for setting the mental powers into a final swing "i.e. into a play which is self-maintaining and which strengthens those powers for such activity".[327]

It is possible to discern the essential elements of play in the activity of a playing child. When children start to play the first thing they do is to make up a setting or a situation, accompanied by a story, where they could experiment with their own experience. This entertaining method makes the experience of life easily perceptible for their understanding and lets them grasp the general truth about life in ways that are comprehensible to them. In

[325] Rank 1923, 106.
[326] Rank 1923, 108-109.
[327] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, I,I,I, Fourth moment, XLIX, (Walker 2009, 153).

this case the child learns how to articulate her own views and put them into action using different sets of experiments.

Involvement of more than one person in play requires a voluntary nonverbal agreement of players on certain terms. Play teaches one certain kind of flexibility that overcomes rigidity and hostility. The freedom that constitutes the rationale of play does not allow any kind of legal contract between players. There is an element of vulnerability in play: the players agree on rules solely on the grounds of trust. The game is over when the freedom of one player violates the freedom of the other. Therefore the paradox of play lies precisely in the accommodation of the freedom of all within the one's freedom to play. The players agree on cooperation within a certain set of parameters that makes them belong to the play and not claiming the play for themselves. If one of them breaks this rule and makes the game his own, then the game ends in disappointment. The common willingness to play according to common rules challenges their own self-centeredness. Involving other people in the game increases the level of unpredictability, and puts the child's inner security at risk while a solitary game promises her a total security but it is not long before it becomes excessively predictable and unexciting. A game, for a child is no longer a mere entertainment but it involves hard work and requires a responsibility where the child learns how to adapt and accommodate the other, constantly checking his own values by juxtaposing and comparing them with the values of others. Therefore, cooperation is an essential part of every play and the other way round, every cooperation based on mutual love entails an element of play. It is not that the people involved are losing their own identities but they constantly have to adjust to each-others perceptibility for the sake of that union that play makes possible. The more people are involved in the play, the more complex yet exciting is the play. Unpredictability as an essential ingredient of play involves a risk, which is a natural human urge, yet as a way of crossing the boundary of the unknown, it also threatens one's security.

Western psychoanalysis observes that "play is as serious for a child as the cult was for the primitive man. In every case play, by diminishing fear, liberates an energy which can ultimately express itself creatively".[328] The psychology of play implies that the child's play is in fact more productive in terms of learning self-denial than as a way of developing one's own ego. Gadamer believes that to start discussion on artistic play from subjectivity is to

[328] Rank 1923, 324.

miss the point, because what no longer exist in play is a player.[329] Gadamer suggests that a player should not look at the play as an object but the play itself is the chief agent in making. The 'subject' or the focus of art "is not to the subjectivity of the person who experiences it, but the work itself".[330] Gadamer opposes Plato's limitation of mimesis as imitation and takes a more Aristotelian path in the understanding of art. Gadamer wisely evaluated the role of play in art and juxtaposed it with the idea of subjective self-representation. He believes that even the "classical theory of art, which bases all art on the idea of mimesis, *imitation*, obviously starts from play in the form of dancing, which is the representation of the divine".[331] Even though the player knows that he is playing and that this is only a game, "he does not know what exactly he 'knows' in knowing that".[332] The power of play outweighs the player's subjective self. Moreover, "Play fulfils its purpose only if the player loses himself in his play".[333] Gadamer refers by play, in relation to art, to the mode of being in the work of art itself.[334] Play is a way of making things easier and more understandable to simple minds as children. The ease of play does not refer to the absence of effort, but it refers to presenting the game in such a way that provokes a response "experienced subjectively as relaxation".[335]

Play instinct is most likely to be originated, not from the desire for victory, but from the quest for the unknown or even curiosity: looking for something that is not accessible yet it could or might exist The freedom of imagination appears as a key factor not only in the process of creating but also in the process of playing. Imagination can offer an idle escape but it can also turn into the inscape for the sake of finding, discovering the universal truth implanted in the core (or conscience) of every human being. The desire for defining, précising and correcting appears to be the underlining feature of every play. However, every player is aware that the process of perfection is as infinite as play even if one decides to regard the victory as the end of the game. The play of art "does not simply exhaust itself in momentary transport, but has a claim to permanence and the permanence of a claim".[336] Heidegger pointed out that art is "the disclosure of the particular being in its being, the

[329] Gadamer 2004, 103.
[330] Ibid.
[331] Gadamer 2004, 113.
[332] Gadamer 2004, 103.
[333] Ibid.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Gadamer 2004, 105.
[336] Gadamer 2004, 123.

happening of truth".[337] The eternal dimension of the play is not revealed through its result as much as it is the process that affects the inner state of players by causing their inner transformation. Discovering a new being at every change automatically expands the discoverer's inner world. Role play, for example, does not change the personality or the character of the performer but it enriches the player by shifting his mental and emotional horizons from the existed and real to the possible and imaginary, facing the change every moment. The consideration of infinite possibilities is broadened and enriched throughout the experience of play. The playful engagement in the work of art enables both the artist and the viewer to increase their connection with nature and the natural state of being in a somewhat unexpected way. Heidegger has pointed out the importance of transforming "our accustomed ties to world and to earth and henceforth restrain all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work".[338] Gadamer recalls the constantly self-renewing play of nature and considers it as a model for art. Schlegel likewise claims that "all the sacred games of art are only remote imitations of the infinite play of the world, the eternally self-creating work of art".[339] A human being learns the game from nature itself – the natural cycle of self-renewal, perfection, change and growth is echoed in the work of art as well as in the process of its appreciation.

Considering art as a skill of playing is ultimately linked with its potential of engaging an observer in a playful discovery of the truth. Aristotle suggested initially: "We play for the sake of recreation".[340] Gadamer emphasises that "artistic presentation, by its nature, exists for someone, even if there is no one there who merely listens or watches".[341] The task of rhetoric in art is to let the viewers search for the truth by the mental, emotional and intellectual aid of what they see in the picture. Therefore the main task of the artist is to find more and more appealing ways to touch the hearts of hearers, encouraging them to see beyond what they see. Gadamer rightly argues that the being of art cannot be determined as an object of an aesthetic appreciation, but on the contrary, "the aesthetic attitude is more than it knows of itself. It is a part of the *event of being that occurs in presentation, and*

[337] Heidegger in Cahn&Meskin 2007, 350.
[338] Heidegger in Meskin 2007, 356.
[339] Schlegel, quoted by Gadamer 2004, 105.
[340] Aristotle *Politics*, VIII, 3, 1337b 39.
[341] Gadamer 2004, 110.

belongs essentially to play as play".[342] The language of art as different from the language of documentary narrative is distinguished by the use of metaphor that gives it a poetic dimension. The use of metaphor itself grants art a quality of play. Poetic diction stands out against prosaic "by the use of unfamiliar terms, i.e strange words, metaphors, lengthened forms, and everything that deviates from the ordinary modes of speech".[343]

Play is an essential feature of art. No art can be regarded as art that does not allow an element of 'hide and seek'. The quality most peculiar to art is that while it hides and masks something in fact it discloses its essential and more real meaning. The fact is that the more revealing and straightforward is art the less powerfully it appeals to the senses. The more mimetic is art, the less it leaves the space for the imagination to make connections and allow the observer's personal contact with it. So imitation is obviously not enough for an artwork to appeal to the observer if there is no element of play inviting the viewer to be part of the living experience of the picture. It is hard to expect the peaches of Cezanne to stand for something else other than themselves.[344] Yet the message they convey is not about their prettiness but about their liveliness. The ultimate message they convey is therefore the message about the beauty of life and its eternal bliss.

Play in artistic process involves more than a mere visual interplay of shapes, colours and lines. Likewise, the playful engagement of the observer into the work of art involves more than merely displaying the artwork in public. The dynamism and power of a special invitation for the public to be part of the painting raises the value of the artwork. Visual engagement into the work of art is triggered either by the level of beauty, or by dynamism or by the visual trickery which induces the observer's eye towards one or the other object. Even in the case of visual trickery, the real process of mental submission consists of not "one color that plays against another, but that there is one process or sight displaying a changing variety of colors".[345] The dynamism of perception happens in one's mind while directing the eyesight to a particular form. The perception of art is a synthesis of lots of elements and their interplay, which produces mental connections and lets the observers become part of the work of art through their own response.

[342] Gadamer 2004, 115.
[343] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 22. 1456b.
[344] Illustration №99.
[345] Gadamer 2004, 104.

The most powerful element of play in the process of art appreciation is the trick of leaving forms or compositions unfinished. The diligently completed composition causes a peaceful sense of security, beauty and harmony, while deliberately leaving a depiction unfinished can cause a sense of wonder that engages the observer's curiosity and turns him or her into another artist mentally filling and extending the existed part of the work. One of the tricks widely employed by artists to incorporate the public into their paintings was the use of the mirror, as discussed earlier. However, the other visual tricks, whether they be open doors with empty spaces behind, or corners of the rooms cut by the frames as in the paintings of impressionists, or parts of compositions left deliberately undone (like in Michelangelo's slaves or the ambiguous smile on Mona Lisa's lips) move the observer's imagination and desire to work with the artist, to extend the presentation. Ambiguity in art like the enthymeme in literary art is the most powerful tool: it appears as the syllogism that leaves something out and expects the audience to fill in the missing premise. The quest for the unknown guides the player who knows the rules of the game but he does not know the process of the game or its result. Likewise the work of art in both the process of creating and in the process of appreciating leads the human mind in the most unexpected directions towards the joy of disclosing. In the process of deconcealing "the art work opens up in its own way the being of beings... Art is truth setting itself to work".[346] An Orthodox scholar also points out that "Criticism and intellectual games in the area of the arts can be, for the artist, a pretext for further research and creation; his function is beyond the critical process, because its end is not known and cannot be assumed to be known. In that sense the artistic process is a mystery that connects this world and the other one"[347].

Gadamer wisely points out that there is a difference between a spectator who "gives himself entirely to the play of art, and someone who merely gapes at something out of curiosity".[348] The reproductive arts have this special quality: that the works "are explicitly left open to such re-creation and thus visibly hold the identity and continuity of the work of art open towards the future".[349] The sense of awe and wonder is the key element of the playful engagement in the process of art appreciation. It induces the observer into the experience of the mysterious, "the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true

[346] Heidegger in Cahn&Meskin 2007, 351.
[347] Andreopoulos 2006, 127.
[348] Gadamer 2004, 122.
[349] Gadamer 2004, 117.

science. He who does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle".[350] The sense of wonder accompanying the process of appreciation of an artwork turns the process into a living experience and a work of art itself.

4.13. A theological examination of the concept of play in an artistic context

A theological analysis of play and game is bound to regard play even more seriously than western psychology considers the child's game. The theological origin of the meaning of play in an artistic context finds its origin in God's creative work. The story of the creation of God according to Genesis implies to God's playful engagement in the creative process. It would merge with blasphemy to suggest that God played with the creation in a human sense of 'fun' and mere entertainment. Yet the elements of creative play obviously originate from the model of God's creation even though God created all beings out of nothingness (unlike the human creator). God created the world out of nothing and at every stage of His creation He "saw that it was good".[351] God's approval of His own creation can hardly imply that there could have been anything outside of God's anticipation. It is questionable whether God's rejoicing was caused by the surprise of seeing something 'new' or by the satisfaction of reaching the predetermined target. According to Ecclesiastes "what has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun".[352] Yet God is the author of all things and therefore things that are not new to us were once new when God created them. Maximus the confessor's interpretation of the passage speaks of the 'original things' and 'last things' suggesting that what has been created according to the Logos' providence is what is sure to find fulfillment in the eschatological scheme of things.[353]

Yet the same passage can also be applied to God's continuing creative work that is the same as it was and always will be. The living spirit of the Logos is constantly recreating the world. God's immense love that required sharing and multiplying became the foundation for creating a human being who would share the likeness of God yet be independent through his own will and it would make possible a relationship which is also characteristic to the principles of play. Surrendering one's own will to the will of God voluntarily is in

[350] Einstein in Calaprice 1996, 210.
[351] Genesis 1:9,12,18,1,25,31.
[352] Ecclesiastes 1:9
[353] Maximus, *Ambigua* 71, (PG 91:1412D) (Constas 2014).

fact submission to the rules of the divine play leading towards deification. Even though there can hardly be anything unpredictable and unknown to God, but unpredictability of communication is possible only when beings with independent wills engage in the same game. Freedom of will is the chief condition of God's love and overflowing generosity, which makes possible the communication between God and humans. God created the world out of a love that became the basis of life in His creation. The creation of God fascinates us by its changeable dynamic nature, by its ability to transform, grow and reproduce. By implanting the creative seed in all his creatures, the creator proposed the sacred 'game' to which all are invited. The rules of the game in art as play find their roots precisely in God's choice to grant free will to human beings and invite them to be in communion out of freedom, not by force. The aspect of make-believe in God's eternal 'play' is not his invisibility, but it is precisely the visibility of His creation. The world is the one that came into existence through Him and became real. The world was created not as illusion but as real, yet the fall imbued it with illusion, since its present form lost the eternal dimension. The comparison of artistic creation with the creative work of God grants the element of play a rather sacred value. Play is not as simple as the world often sees it. Patristic thought formulated a theory of the play of the Logos-Creator: "The Logos-at-play bespeaks the Creator's urge to cajole and 'tease' the creation towards its true destiny, using all created 'playthings' at its disposal".[354] The famous image of St Gregory of Nazianzus sees the Creator of the world as the Logos who "on high plays, stirring the whole cosmos back and forth as he wills, into shapes of every kind".[355] Gregory of Nazianzus's image of the Logos-at-play creates a rather daring statement, yet the analogy of divine play has its roots in classical sources: Plato's earlier metaphor on humanity as a divine "plaything"[356] must have inspired Plotinus's idea of humans being "living toys".[357] The Christian contextualization of classical wisdom led the Fathers of the Church towards discerning the notion of divine play in the very concept of the Incarnation.

Maximus the Confessor further evaluated Gregory's image of the playful manoeuvring of the Logos, which he saw chiefly in the virtue of his Incarnation among other aspects. It is

[354] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata Theologica (moralia)*, 1.2.15. *De exterioris hominis Vilitate*, (PG 37:776A).
[355] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata Theologica (moralia)*, 1.2.2. (P.G 37:624A – 625A), quoted by Hugo Rahner 1967, 23.
[356] Plato, *Laws* 644D-E, 803 B-C.
[357] Plotinus, *Ennead* 3.2.15 (LCL 442:90-94).

worth noting how daringly, eloquently and experimentally Maximus 'played' with Gregory's imagery of the 'Logos at play'. According to Maximus, the Logos has always and will always play in the creation, perfecting the apparel of its eschatological fullness. Speaking from a historical perspective, the element of play in the context of the Incarnation served as a method of *paedia* providing a special form of instruction that would be understandable and perceivable to human beings, whose nature has been affected and limited by the results of the fall. Maximus renders the image of parents condescending to take part in their children's games, using nuts and dice and flowers as toys, or playing hide-and seek, before starting to train them on the more serious matters of adulthood.[358] The idea echoes Plato's recommendation of forms of play as an honourable way of bringing up children and cultivating their sensibility to *paideia* and philosophy. Likewise Maximus enhances Gregory's analogy of the 'Logos at play' by projecting it through the lens of Pseudo-Dionysius's image of God's ecstasy towards creation, his passionate outreach to the world. For Maximus the image of divine play is another apt metaphor for the 'hidden fruitfulness' and infinite creativity of God, who reaches down from his transcendence in 'ecstatic' love for the creation".[359] Maximus describes the Logos as being like a compassionate parent or a pedagogue stooping to his creatures' childish play in order to allure them to the greater contemplation leading eventually towards deification. The analogy of God's ecstatic attempt of rescuing his creatures embraces the other analogy of the benevolent pedagogy of the Logos performed through the play of likeness.

God designed the Divine 'game' of the Incarnation as a method of inducing humanity into the process of deification: "The Word of God became man, that thou mayest learn from man how man may become God".[360] God in relation to humankind employed a method commonly used by parents and teachers in the process of educating young children whose mentality has not been shaped sufficiently for appreciating and adopting the content that is presented through play. In other words God performed his redemptive work by engaging into a playful interaction with humankind in order to transform and heal its wounded nature. Maximus the Confessor sees Gregory's meaning of God's play as suggesting that "God conducts us through these very [material] things to that which truly is and that

[358] Maximus, *Ambigua* 71, (PG 91:1413 B-C).
[359] Balthasar 2003, 103-106.
[360] Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen*, Chapter 1.

endures ever unshakable".[361] The method of play fulfilled "God's providential plan to convert creatures from the confusion of material existence to the equanimity of spiritual goods".[362]

Maximus's contemplation on Nazianzus' image of Logos-at-play ultimately refers to deification requiring humans to contemplate the material world through their noetic lenses and acquire the vision of "the future archetype of divine and authentic life".[363] The transitory and dream like nature of the world in Maximus' view is like dust, vapour, early morning dew, a flower that looms for a time and quickly fades".[364]

In Plotinus's thought the Logos represented the world of ideas in the material cosmos by comprehending all the individual logoi of created beings. It had a unifying and centralizing nature that gathered the logoi of all things in itself. Maximus on the other hand describes the Logos more as "incarnating" himself in the logoi of creatures, in an eschatological perspective. The logos is not a collection of the logoi of things but it is their source and origin. The mystery of the Logos-at-play for Maximus is the mystery of the Incarnation, not only of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, but embracing all the 'incarnations' of the Logos in the logoi of the world in its eschatological fullness.

The concept of the Incarnation of the Logos in the logoi,[365] or natural principles is an enormous theme in Maximus' cosmology. In a playful image in Ambigua 10 Maximus describes how the Logos, who moved across the chasm and took flesh as the 'seed of Abraham', diversified his presence while maintaining his perfect unity, 'scattering himself indivisibly among all those worthy to receive him.[366] Patristic thought points to the element of play as a powerful tool enabling God to reach the hearts of people. A bridge between God and humankind lies through playful and living communication engaging both sides freely and creatively. For Maximus, as for Gregory, his teacher, any exploration into the divine *oikonomia* is necessarily also a venture into *theologia.*[367] Therefore, the element of

[361] Maximus, *Ambigua*,71 (PG91:1416 A-B).
[362] Maximus, Ep.10 (PG 91:449 C-D).
[363] Maximus, *Ambigua*, 71 (PG 91:1416C-D).
[364] Maximus, Or. 7:19, in *Ambigua*,71 (PG 91:1416 C-D).
[365] Maximus, *Ambigua*,7. (PG 91:1077 C-1085A), to (1188C-93C), 33 (1285C-88A).
[366] Maximus, *Ambigua*,10 (PG 91:1172 A-C).
[367] See Maximus' *Expositio orationis dominicae* (CCSG 23:31-32) on the incarnate logos being the 'teacher' of theologia, the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

play appears as an immensely significant factor in patristic theology bonding God and humankind into a living communion.

Theological interpretation of the meaning of play in an artistic context directly refers to the use of metaphor in Christian education. Fairy tales for children usually appear with a secular content embracing the world of magic and mythology, teaching the values of goodness, morality and bravery. The well known form of the parable was widely used by both Jewish and Hellenistic cultures as a method of interpreting sacred literature by means of universal symbolic modalities. The traditional practice of storytelling was keenly adopted and employed by Jesus Christ throughout his earthly ministry. The biblical form of narration involves the combined use of poetry and realistic imagery. The parables of Christ that contain the artistic method of concealing in order to reveal, offer a convincing narrative of a believable realistic story, yet every Christian is aware of the existence of a greater meaning behind every story. By proposing a realistic story understandable to everyone, Christians are invited to make mental connections that turn the references to real things into metaphors pointing toward the ultimate human relationship with God. The parable of the prodigal son conveys the message of repentance and God's infinite mercy, yet the eloquence of its presentation makes the message unforgettable for people regardless of the level of their intelligence. The fall, in fact, is clear evidence of human insensitivity to hearing a straightforward message. The use of a form of parable and a play is God's attempt to consider the level of human perceptiveness and spiritual sensitivity. It is an expression of God's infinite mercy that can even respect and accommodate human weakness and speak in limited terms within the frames of human understanding.

Apostolic and Patristic texts, as well as liturgical hymnography are highly appreciative of the use of allegory. Paul makes an explicit reference to an allegorical symbolic reading of the texts.[368] Origen of Alexandria developed allegorical interpretations of sacred texts in the third century, seeing it as "a deeper, symbolic 'spiritually acute' reading of the Biblical narrative".[369] Ephraim the Syrian's *Hymns on Faith* stands as a remarkable example of the Church's allegorical fluency. The constant linking of Christ with the Sun, of the mother of God with the flourished vineyard, and so on, suggest that the consciousness of goodness assimilates familiar images from the material world as a means to describe the majesty of

[368] Galatians 4:24. Allegorical symbols: 1 Cor 5:6-8. 1 Cor 9:8-14, 1 Cor 10:1-5.
[369] McGuckin 2005, 7.

God and His saints. The use of allegory is the characteristic element of *Ekphrasis* as a Poetic discernment of the spiritual essences (the logoi) of things. According to Irenaeus "Nothing may be turned into allegory, but everything must be firm and true and have substance".[370] The invisible truth has to be expressed by a substance, "the Incomprehensible by means of the comprehensible, and the Invisible by the visible".[371] Irenaeus poetically expresses the way the allegory can transform and make the message more appealing and moving: "The parables will harmonize with plain speech, plain speech will unlock the parables and through the polyphony of the utterance a single symphonic melody will be audible within us".[372] The allegorical language of parables therefore has power to illuminate the real situation in the light of Christ.

The secret to the power of play must be found in the simple fact that the truth that is discovered and shared out of freedom is usually more precious and dearer than the truth imposed, since one spends one's choice and efforts in the process of seeking and finding. Making a mental connection requires activation of one's mind / nous by which one finds oneself engaged in the living process of interacting with an artwork. That is why the Orthodox method of spiritual guidance often prefers to use the method of metaphor and analogy over prescribing readymade recipes on the faithful. Instead the Orthodox *Elders* are supposed to teach people to listen to their own conscience and discover the truth by themselves. In this respect the art of spiritual guidance is fulfilling the general mission of art. Art is no longer good or great if it fails to speak in a form of a parable.

Yet, some Orthodox authors tend to juxtapose the mental speculation involved in the understanding of western art against the spiritual and prayerful contemplation of iconography and liturgical art. Michel Quenot singles out iconography from the rest of arts by its being straightforward and non-allegoric: "Quite different from profane art, in which symbolism expresses itself by means of allegory, the iconic themes could never be the fruit of intellectual speculation, because the icon directly reveals and reflects the sacredness of the mystery it portrays. Moreover, it 'lives' by that reality and can thus be understood only within the spiritual realm, raising a corner of the veil to show us the spiritual reality which remains above and beyond any verbal formula".[373] Yet, John of Damascus did not hesitate

[370] Irenaeus, 2.426, quoted by Balthasar 1991, 56.
[371] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book III, Ch.II, *The Anti-Nicene Fathers,* Vol.I, p.427.
[372] Balthasar 1991, p.73.
[373] Quenot 1992, 67.

to believe that "Every image 'reveals and shows something that is hidden".[374] St Theodore the Studite affirmed that "we are taught to draw not only what comes into our perception by touch and sight, but also whatever is comprehended in thought by mental contemplation".[375] The truth is that the direct and straightforward revelation would not require a depicted image if the image was itself available. One can state with confidence that there shall be no need for praying with icons in heaven among the company of God and His saints. Therefore, even though the reference to the sacred *is* more straightforward in iconography than it is in western art where one has to search for the sacred meaning, any art including iconography is destined to use the language of metaphor playfully in order to reach the hearts of the hearers. The need for play would not be included in God's plans if it was not enforced by the limitations of the fallen human nature that we all share.

The principle of accommodating human limitation became the guiding aspect of Christ's Incarnation. Human imagination works through analogies. Our mind can imagine only what it is familiar with. The fact that God has appeared in a human form reveals His extreme effort to make us want to become like Him. God's voluntary adoption of human nature forced humans to proclaim: "I venerate the fashioner of matter, who became matter for my sake and accepted to dwell in matter and through matter worked my salvation"[376]. St John is wondering: "If then the divine Word, foreknowing our need for analogies and providing us everywhere with something to help us ascend, applies certain forms to those things that are simple and formless, how may not those things be depicted which are formed in accordance with our nature, and longed for, although they cannot be seen owing to their absence?"[377] Alexei Losev offered his own definition of play as the essential foundation of the whole artistic aesthetic being.[378] He emphasized that it is precisely our engagement in the play that grants us joy and delight while contemplating the work of art and precisely this joy and delight is the goal of our relation to art. Losev assumed that "artistic form lets us feel what is above feeling; we relate ourselves to something, which we consider to be us but in fact, it is not us but a special first created image, which has nothing to do with either us or with the form. And within this controversy and the delight we take from the artistic

[374] John of Damascus, 3.16-17.
[375] St Theodore of Studios, p.31.
[376] John of Damascus, 1.16.
[377] John of Damascus, 1.11.
[378] Losev 1927, 86.

form appears as a fulfilment of the joys of the blessed play".[379] The dialectical solution to the artistic form lays in its first created image,[380] in its archetype, essence, inner riches, diversity and significance. The eloquence of parables lies precisely in the simplicity of the choice of stories and images that make the general message understandable to everyone. Justin Martyr told the Greeks about the prophets: "For they do not present to you artful discourses, nor speak speciously and plausibly – for this is the property of those who wish to rob you of the truth – but use with simplicity the words and expressions which offer themselves, and declare to you whatever the Holy Ghost, who descended upon them, chose to teach through them to those who are desirous to learn the true religion".[381] The eloquence and oratorical skills were appreciated in the Christian world but the main task was to speak the truth and not to boast with eloquence itself.

Maguire observed that the authors writing on Byzantine art normally make an observation about the realistic and abstract elements of icons. Even though the attempt to portray the divinity of God was forbidden for it was impossible, there was still a way of referring to it in artistic terms. Maguire distinguishes between the elements referring to the human and divine natures of Christ in iconography: "The classical or realistic, features of the image (delicate modelling, the mother's inclined head) signify the humanity of Christ, while the abstract elements (harmonic severity of the composition, lack of eye contact between the figures within the picture) signify His divinity".[382] In other words, he finds the symbolism of obscurity responsible for presenting the divine nature of Christ Precisely the elements of unpredictability and surprise that accompany artistic creation as well as its appreciation turns art into a mystery and grants it the power of influencing the minds of people: "Criticism and intellectual games in the area of the arts can be, for the artist, a pretext for further research and creation; his function is beyond the critical process, because its end is not known and cannot be assumed to be known. In that sense the artistic process is a mystery that connects this world and the other one".[383]

The mysteriousness and risk involved in touching the unknown invisible world makes an artistic creation special and explains the power of artistic expression and its influence.

[379] Losev 1927, 76.
[380] Losev 1927, 90.
[381] Justin Martyr, Oration, *Address to the Greeks*, *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, Vol, I, p.287.
[382] Maguire 1998, 106.
[383] Andreopoulos 2006, 127.

Curiosity and surprise emerge as driving forces accumulating the sense of awe and wonder. The discernment required of the faithful while attempting to understand the work of art is not found in the level of their intelligence or their educational background, but in their desire to discover a different revelation of the general truth. The sense of awe and wonder generated from the unpredictability of play has a greater value than merely being beneficial for the formation of human psyche and emotional stability. According to Maximus the starting point of the 'logos at play' is the prior observation that the 'abyss' of the mind must reach out to the 'abyss 'of divine wisdom.[384] God's endless attempts to break down human stereotypes over what is possible and what is impossible include the virgin birth, the incarnation of God, and the defeat of death by death. The Biblical references to God's almightiness in fact suggest the failure of endless human attempts at taking over by breaking the ultimate rule of the divine game that is unconditional love, which passes beyond the limitations of human understanding. God bends down in a form of play instructing his creatures when they fail to comprehend his divine will. Ambiguity that leaves the space for the imagination and expects the hearer or viewer to respond, think and make an effort to understand, appeals to that "Immaculate uncircumscribility" that "makes divinity known".[385]

Charles Lock speaks of *Perichoresis,* as something that involves making room, which is the very heart of hospitality.[386] The level of hospitality between the artist and the world passes the boundaries set by time, culture, political and religious beliefs. Artists present the primordial quest for sharing the game "as a preparatory exercise for the object of their longing, the dance of everlasting life".[387] As Rahner rightly suggested artistic play is first of all a man's deep seated longing for a free, unfettered, eager harmony between body and soul",[388] it illustrates the "game of heaven and earth"[389] beyond cultural, historical, ethnic, political, class and other limitations.

Summary

This chapter explored the Eastern Christian response to the works of Western art. It demonstrated patristic views of the elements that are not always consciously employed by

[384] Maximus, *Ambigua*, 71. (PG 91:1412 A-B).
[385] Theodore the Studios, 92.
[386] Lock 2008, 51.
[387] Rahner 1967, 87.
[388] Rahner 1967, 7.
[389] Rahner 1967, 10.

western artists. Similarities of thought between the patristic interpretations of the love of beauty, playful search for truth, quest for immortality and the western artistic manifestations of the same concepts reveal the traces of truth looming in all aspects of human life despite their exclusion from the Orthodox tradition. Criticism of western art for its materialism and rejection of the Sacred Tradition has been part of Orthodox Scholarship since the time when western influences threatened the purity and authenticity of Orthodox iconography. The appreciation of certain elements in western art detached from the context of iconography, does not imply an acceptance all aspects thereof, nor does it suggest including the masterpieces of western art into the Orthodox Liturgy. The ways of Liturgical and secular arts are separated on the ground of their function. Nevertheless the function of secular art proves to be immensely significant, especially in modern society.

In the age of technical civilization, when human beings are overloaded with noise, pace, stress, isolation and hostility, "A man should hear a little music, read a little poetry, and see a fine picture every day of his life, in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of the beautiful which God has implanted in the human soul"[390]. The traces of beauty coming from different places settle as sediments in the human heart and mind and cultivate taste and sensibility towards the good and authentic beauty that in its turn makes one's heart more receptive for divine grace in prayerful contemplation.

[390] Goethe, quoted by McGuire 2012, 109.

Conclusion

This thesis examined the diversity of modern Orthodox Christian views over the question of non-liturgical painting, and tried to analyze it in the light of patristic approaches to the separate components employed by western acts of artistic creativity.

Chapter 1 listed those modern Orthodox authors who thought and studied the concepts of art and creativity as a general phenomenon. The study distinguished between two groups of authors: One group of authors see the concept of artistic creativity in a general context as a phenomenon having a divine origin and therefore to be admired and appreciated. The other group however, dedicates their work to comparative analysis and setting a certain hierarchical order between iconography and western art. The view as stated in the thesis owes a great deal to the attempts of the 20th century Orthodox scholarship that aimed at explaining the difference between eastern and western Christian artistic traditions, considering the danger coming from the long history of westernization of iconography. The special context of this argument, however, proves to be less valid nowadays when the need for pointing out the insufficient theological meaning of western religious art has naturally been replaced by the need for perceiving religious expression in secular art in general. In the age of technical civilization followed by the crisis of spirituality, the line between religious and secular is no longer as fine as it was before. The way of expressing the religious has changed in western art from the thematic representation to the mood and atmosphere... The definition of the religious changed in mentality. The meaning of the word spiritual, which in medieval times implied to *noetic*, today has a wider meaning (apart from spiritualism) involving anything that is oriented toward the sense of life and liveliness, as opposed to the mechanistic and robotic. Therefore this chapter displayed the context of all the 'pro' and 'anti' arguments regarding non-liturgical art expressed by modern Orthodox theologians.

Chapter 2 observed the phenomenon of the artist from the western and eastern aesthetic perspectives. The main difference between the artist and iconographer is to be found in the difference of the functions of their creations. The iconographer is bound by the faithfulness to the tradition and canonical way of presenting the divine for the purpose of veneration as opposed to the western artist who creates out of freedom in order to share the truth that he discovered. This chapter examined the considerations of the person of the artist from the

perspectives of different disciplines. The psychoanalytical, sociological, historical and autobiographical characteristics of the artistic personality acquired a theological evaluation. Considering creativity as a special and a distinctive gift, the true personality of the artist is to be found in his creative self rather than in what kind of person he is or what he does on a daily basis. The meaning of what he creates outweighs the possibilities of the personal failure of the artist. The artist, like a *theoros*, is gifted with the ability to interpret the true meaning of things. He longs for immortality by grasping and sharing the meaning of the world and eternal life. According to John Zizioulas' profound comparison, the artist stands out as a priest of the creation who brings the fruit of his making and offers it to God on behalf of all, the duty that we all are called to take up.[1]

Chapter 3 presents a rather ontological study of art and its definitions since the dialogue between Plato and Aristotle to the present day in both East and West. The chapter discusses some of the most exemplary artworks since the prehistoric era to the present day and examines a developmental line of the rationale of art. The history of the Italian Renaissance and its causes are examined with special interest in order to demonstrate that the art of the Italian Renaissance is not as much the fruit of the Church's and state's common secularization as it is an artistic voice exposing them. If art was required to secularize itself, it had to find an implicit way of pointing towards the eternal. If the Christ painted by an Italian was to become too human to redeem the world, the creative consciousness of the artist was engaged in the search of another means of expressing divinity, whether it was the sense of the beauty of the composition of colours and shapes, or visual trickery including an open horizon taking the gaze from the depicted object towards infinite space, or even skill and mastery over the form. Anything that could speak up for something beyond this world emerged as a voice of the Christian conscience breaking through and defeating the earthliness of the artwork's commissioner. The social taste and standards of Italian society introduced into art the separation between the theme (religious subject), its embodiment (earthly, humanized and naturalistic forms and shapes) and the embedded message of the relevant experience of the subject which became perceivable only to those who had their sensibility developed for the truth, the beautiful and the good.

[1] John Zizioulas, "Proprietors or Priests of Creation?" http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles2/MetJohnCreation.php Last accessed on 02.08.2015.

Chapter 4 as a logical continuation to the previous chapter deals with human responses to art with a special reference to Orthodox Christians. A special historical background is provided for western aesthetics that allows the examination of Orthodox Christian responses to western aesthetic thought, as well as to the individual masterpieces of western art. Elements of deception are employed by artistic presentation for rhetorical purposes like a metaphor standing for some greater and more profound truth. The element of play is considered from a western aesthetic perspective as well as from patristic sources that link it directly with the concept of the Incarnation. The discussion of beauty as seen by western aesthetics is taken with caution in this chapter since the power of beauty contains a rather seductive danger. Therefore St Basil's teaching is the highlight of this chapter: "In studying pagan lore one must discriminate between the helpful and the injurious, accepting the one, but closing one's ears to the siren song of the other".[2] While Baumgarten took it for granted that truth, goodness and beauty were supposed to be in harmony in every expression of beauty, Orthodox theology maintains that only that version of beauty that is in harmony with truth and goodness can claim to be authentic for its transcendental nature. The section on taste argues that appreciation of the work of art, whether from a theological or aesthetic point of view, is much more complex than a simple like or dislike. The crucial importance in consideration of the work of art through the eyes of the Orthodox Christian is given to the liturgical consciousness that the sensibility of the viewer is refined and cultivated by.

In spite of the fact that the role of visual art in the Orthodox Church has been clearly defined ever since the victory over iconoclasm at the Seventh Ecumenical Council, at Nicaea in 787, the question of understanding art and artistic creativity outside the context of ecclesiastical art still remains subject to different views in the Orthodox Church. The fathers of the church, who eagerly studied pagan philosophy and acquired oratorical skills and mastered the art of rhetoric, in no way reject the value of profane learning. St Basil's appreciation: "Profane learning should ornament the mind, as foliage graces the fruit-bearing tree"[3] corresponds to St Paul's proposed idea "solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil".[4] Yet one might wonder if Orthodox believers require their faculties, trained by practice, to

[2] St Basil the Great, *Address to Young Men on The Right Use of Greek Literature*, IV. St Basil, http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/basil_litterature01.htm#6 Last accessed on 02.08.2015.
[3] St Basil, *The Address to Young Men on the right Use of Greek Literature*. Outline, III.
[4] Hebrews 5:14.

distinguish good from evil while venerating icons, does consideration of art outside the canonical boundaries of the church then require even more discernment? The contemporary uneasiness over the subject makes us wonder which art stands for more "solid food" nowadays if the appreciation of icons in the Church does not pose much of a challenge, while seeing the good and the beautiful outside the liturgical boundaries requires considerable discernment and wisdom.

The division of views over the appreciation of western art also contains a hidden message against ecumenical dialogue between the East and West. While the Orthodox can forgive the pagans their natural deprivation of the light of Christ, not all of them excuse their Christian brothers for being outside the true and authentic Church. This thesis offers only a modest suggestion on finding another way of ecumenical dialogue on the grounds of artistic creativity, where the Orthodox voice based on patristic experience can offer more clarification and a deeper interpretation to western aesthetic theories.

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